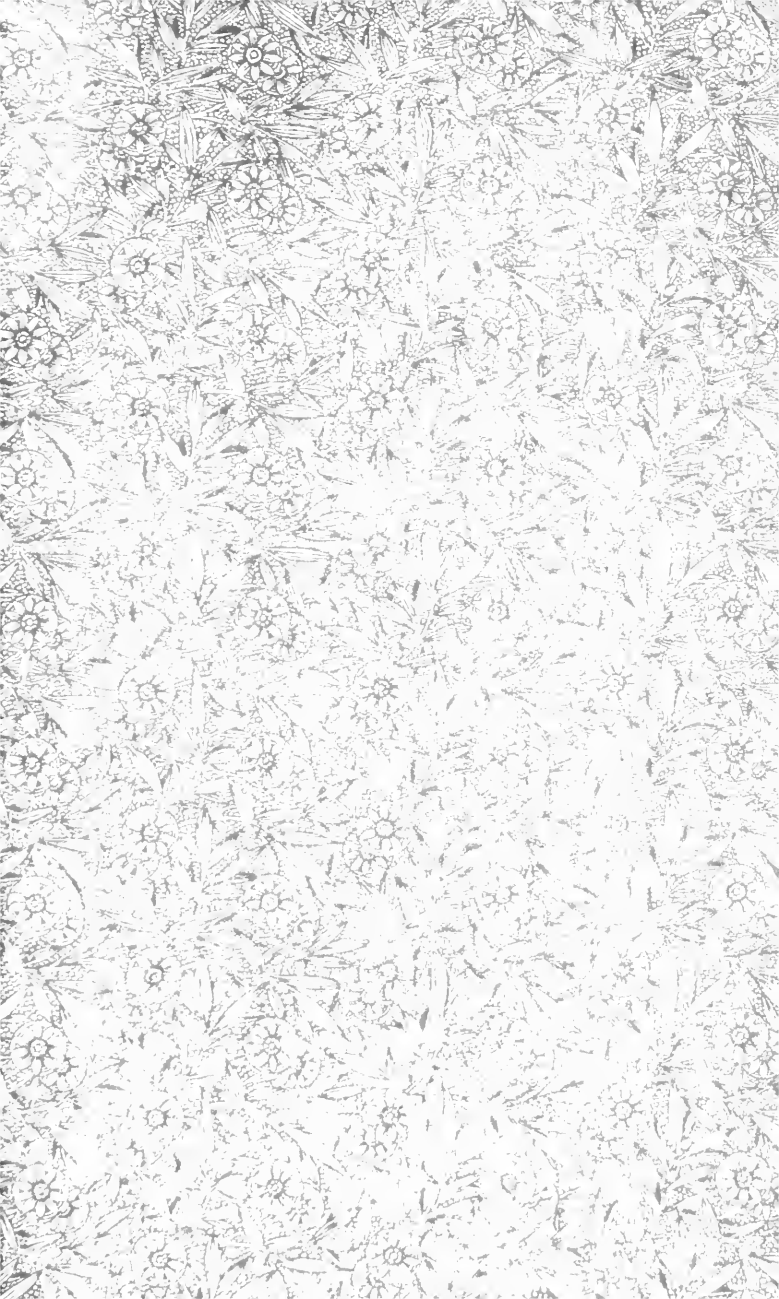




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Chas. T. Pickering

# THE LAST DAVID,

*AND OTHER POEMS.*

By  
Charles J. Pickeering

‘Wel I wot, that ye han herbiforne  
Of makynge ropen, and lad away the corne ;  
And I come after, glenying here and there,  
And am ful glad yf I may fynde an ere  
Of any goodly worde that ye han left.’

CHAUCER.

LONDON :  
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.  
1883.



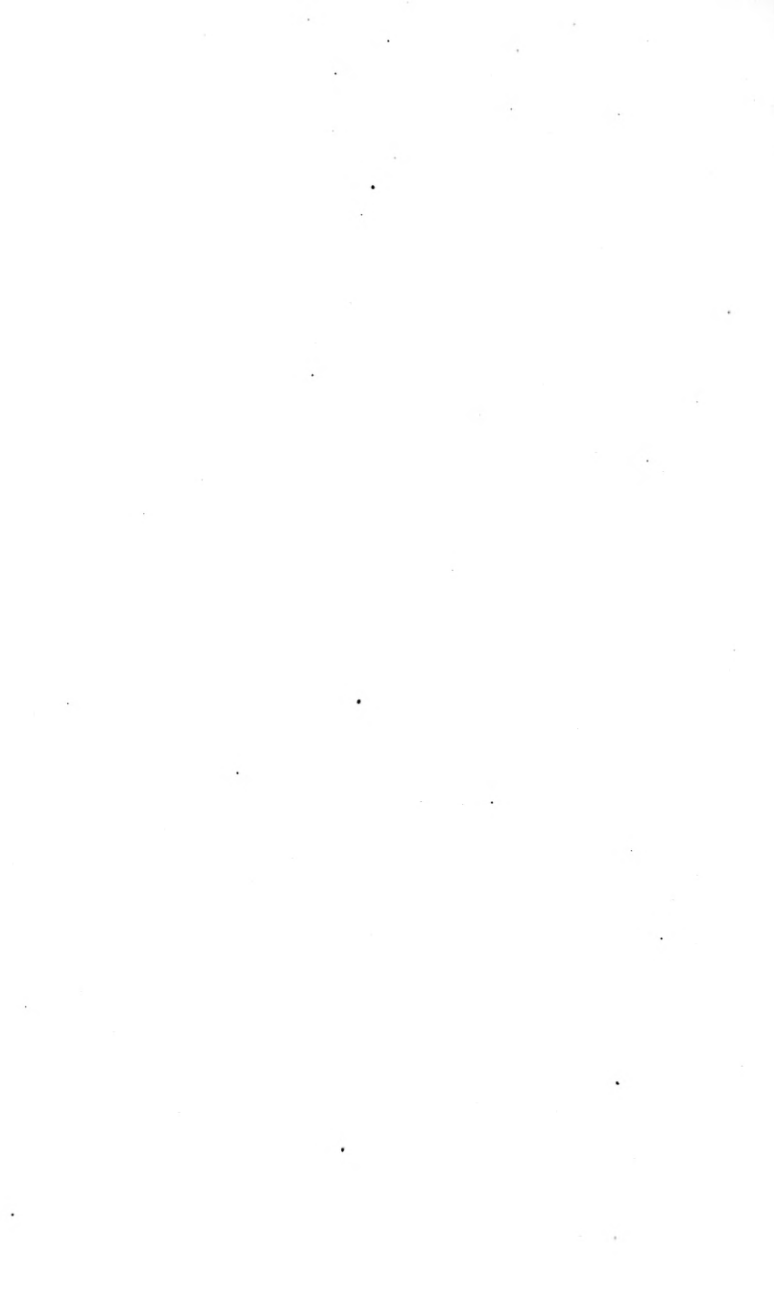


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## CONTENTS.



	PAGE
THE LAST DAVID: A DRAMATIC SKETCH - - -	I
SONGS OF THE WAYSIDE - - - - -	55
KALLIRRHOE - - - - -	76
LYKOPHRON - - - - -	80
DORNRÖSCHEN - - - - -	86
SHELLEY - - - - -	93
REQUIESCAS IN PACE - - - - -	98
ÆTAS NOVA - - - - -	101
OCEAN-IDYLL - - - - -	103
CHILDHOOD - - - - -	105
SONNETS - - - - -	107



THE LAST DAVID.

## PERSONS.

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ZEDEKIAH, *King of Judah.*

ELISHAMA, *an old Counsellor.*

GEDALIAH, *a young Noble.*

NERGAL SHAREZER, *Babylonish General.*

*Warder, old Servant of the Kings.*

*Eunuch of King Zedekiah.*

NAOMI, *a Prophetess.*

*Messengers, Soldiers.*

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*Scene :* East Wall of Jerusalem, adjoining the Temple.

*Time :* Night (of the last day of the eighteen months' siege in the last year of the last King of Southern Palestine).

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‘What if even the rod which despiseth shall be no more?’

WARDER (*alone*).

WEARY am I, and heartsick. Night and day  
Rolls on the din of battle, and the air  
Is thick with cries of slaughter at the walls,  
And death-groans in the streets, where the blue  
famine  
Strikes down our people hourly, and plague runs  
Through thin ranks of defenders, as a flash  
Of lightning rending loftiest cedars down.  
And worse than all, that bane of all our hope,  
Unceasing faction surging to and fro,  
Whereon our ship of state is shattered, till  
Her rent sides gape on ruin. If but he  
That guides her now, were hearted like his sire,  
Not tossed in tempest, but on calmer waters  
And in a harbouring quiet, would we ride,  
Fenced from disaster by the shadowing wing  
Of the great eastern eagle. Never yet  
Have we seen peaceful seasons, prosperous days :

Rich cornfields blooming golden, olive-groves  
Heavy with fruit, and teeming palm and vine,  
And multitudinous congregations streaming  
Through our fair streets, all tending Templeward—  
Not one without his offering, firstling fat  
And spotless, meet for holy festival—  
Since Lord Josiah perished in his prime.  
Ah ! then was mourning, when the messenger  
Came panting from the far-off field, and shouted,  
Not loudly, but with choking voice, as he  
Neared the high gate, that opened as he came,  
'The King is fallen !' And the cry, caught up  
By them within, flew like the wildfire, on  
Through the broad city to the Temple walls,  
And hung on Hinnom valley like a cloud.  
Then from each house the shriek of women rose  
And children, wailing for the fallen ; for he  
Was dear to us, and precious ; and Jehovah  
Had dowered him with a gladness and a strength  
Far past his fathers. Happy was the land  
Beneath him, when he ruled it in his prime,  
Sweeping out old corruption that had eaten  
Into the people like disease, adorning  
Anew the holy places, that for years  
Had lain neglected and untrod. Even now  
Through this mirk night-gloom I can see the shapes  
Of heathen altars whereon one time rose

The stream of sacrifice to Chemosh, Milcom,  
Ashtaroth, and their crew, when worshippers  
Thronged to them, aye, and from our sacred city,  
Now rubbish heaps of ruin whereupon  
Foul worms crawl, and the night-bird winds her horn  
At midnight. All this did that King of ours  
Whom would that high Jehovah had preserved  
To be our guardian still ! But woe is me !  
What boots it to be dreaming, ever dreaming  
Of the past days, days that were once so sweet,  
When all the bitter hail of strong destruction  
Is raining on our heads ?

I hear a hum  
Of voices as in supplication, rise  
From out the Temple depths, and there streams off  
A cloud of incense, scenting all the air,  
Wafted by sea winds eastward over me ;  
And footsteps as of some one springing softly  
Up the high steps, come nearer.—Who art thou ?

EUNUCH.

No fierce Chaldee, but only the King's eunuch !—  
Yet stay, old man, and hear me. Our sad lord,  
Broken in spirit and well-nigh despairing,  
Has gone once more to sacrifice and pray  
I' th 'Temple yonder, hoping still 'gainst hope  
To win some cheering token. Even now

I see him coming hither, and with him  
A lordling whom methinks thou knowest well.

*(They pass aside ; enter KING and GEDALIAH  
speaking.)*

GEDALIAH.

Think on thy people ; they are dying off  
By scores, with, war and want, and pestilence :  
With war, that only lasts while Zedekiah  
Fears to send out a messenger of peace ;  
With want, that would pass over like a cloud  
In summer, were his spirit good to yield  
Our pledged allegiance once again, and see  
Corn pouring in our portals for the people ;  
With pestilence, that walks abroad unchecked  
While famine-stricken corpses strew our streets,  
And there are none to bury them.—Oh, thou  
Who art this people's shepherd and their King,  
Have pity on them, and tear off that veil  
Of clinging death that binds them, so their eyes  
May look upon the light of life again :  
So will they bless thy name, and children's children  
Remember thee with love, as him who erred,  
But yet unwittingly, and turned once more,  
To the right path, long years before he died,  
And prospered after, all his days.



KING.

My soul

Is weary, and I fain would sleep. Thy words  
I hear not, but mine eyes can see thee pleading,  
And doubt not but it is the same old cry  
For weak submission to a wearied foe.  
What wouldst thou have me do? Surrender me,  
My wives, my mother, children, household, all  
To ravishers, who will laugh me to scorn—  
Egged on by them that traitorously forsook me—  
And make me a mere by-word to my neighbours  
Of Ammon, Moab, Edom ; and proud Tyre  
Will dance upon her ocean rock, exulting  
That the third branch of him who brought to shame  
Her cherished idols, and whose influence spread  
Like a broad cedar over all the land,  
Is fallen. Never will I yield to this.

GEDALIAH.

Dead mayst thou be to pity, but to shame  
No son of David's line was dead before.

KING.

What shame? What greater shame could be, than  
that

A king of Judah, after wearying  
His enemy long time with fruitless siege,  
Should tamely yield him at the eleventh hour?

## GEDALIAH.

A shame, a greater shame by thousand-fold,  
Clings to thee now : thou swarest by Jehovah  
To peace and fealty, when the Lord of Babel  
Steadied thy throne for thee, what time the boy  
Jehoiachin—a young and tender boy,  
Warm from his mother's breast, compelled to rule—  
Went weeping with the men of Babel home ;  
A solemn covenant thou tookst, to be  
The friend of Babel always, and the foe  
Of Egypt—but thy pride deluded thee  
Like thy false brother, and the rotten reed  
Was clung to, snapping short, as it did ever ;  
And oaths and promises were flung to the wind.  
But though he is wronged deeply, the great King  
Is no hard dealer, and will spare thy land  
And this fair city and thyself, if only  
Thou bend down thy proud soul, and send him  
peace.

## KING.

I hear thee, son of Shaphan, and I heed thee.  
Leave me awhile, so I may ponder over  
The words thou hast spoken—bitter words, but  
true. *(Partly aside.)*

## GEDALIAH.

May He that sits in heaven above breathe in thee  
A spirit of peace and fair humility ! *[Exit.]*

KING.

True are his words : I felt them cleave my soul  
Like keenest arrows—so they rankle now.  
Ay, oaths are not forgotten, when vain men  
Have trod them underfoot, by Him whose name  
They took, and hallowed were withal. Oh, often  
Has my heart smitten me for that perjury !  
But maybe 'tis too late now for repentance,  
And hope is past, is gone ? And I must go  
Down to the grave unhonoured, and unwept ;  
Sped by my people's curses to the home  
Of shadows, mighty once, 'mong whom the worm  
Crawls, and the spectral owl shrills evermore !  
No, no, it cannot be ! It shall not be !  
The heart in me is changed. Death to old pride,  
And life for Zedekiah and his people !—  
A messenger !—Ho, warder, run and tell

*(Warder comes forward.)*

Lord Gedaliah that the King would see him ;  
Thou'lt find him in the Temple-court. Haste, haste !

*[Exit Warder.]*

—Yet, yield myself into the hand of him  
Who has but cause enough to hate me, put  
Me to foul shame, and call mine enemies round,  
That they may see the friendless King of Judah  
Made sport for them to bark about, like dogs  
About a wounded lion ?—Oh, the gall

Of servitude—it presses me ! And yet  
'Tis not too late, even now, to change my will,  
Fling craven cringing to those dogs that love it,  
And put my honour on, robe-like, again !  
But if he take the city ? If he starve  
The warriors to submission, would not he,  
The proud, stone-hearted captain, stung to rage  
By his long baffling, cast Jerusalem  
Into the gulf of ruin, and my house  
Raze out of life, as if they ne'er had been ?  
I know not !—maybe fearful 'twere to know.  
A thousand times would I that I had never  
Been born, to hurl an innocent boy to ruin,  
And on the shattered remnant of his throne  
Sit like a carrion bird, exulting. There  
I fell ; contented, no, not with the lot  
Of highest in all Judah, save the King,  
And trusted by him with his inmost counsels—  
For he, poor boy ! would often come to me,  
Besecching that his uncle dear would guide him  
In this new project of a stripling's brain—  
Moreover, till his fall, the people loved me,  
And never, as I galloped through the streets  
At morning, with my chosen company,  
Did I see any face that scowled at mine  
As men scowl now ; but every son of Adam  
I passed and greeted, greeted me with smiles,

And called Jehovah's blessing on my head.  
They called me fair—I was not furrowed then  
And grey—and fairest maidens cast on me  
Their looks of love, and murmured sweetest 'Hail !'  
Flinging their lily-garlands, dewy-fresh,  
About my horses' necks ; and some rare bloom  
They would go out at dawn to search for, toss  
Into my car, with all their tender might,  
And weave them simple songs, wherein my name  
Rang often, in low tones that filled the heart  
That heard them with deep joy. Fool that I was,  
To leave all this for factious, traitorous plotting,  
'Gainst him who only joyed to see my joy !  
Fool? Worse than fool !—for if this day he is not,  
Upon my head will rest that guiltless blood  
No sacrifice can purge me of. Had I  
Been born a lowly man, and gained scant fare  
By keeping others' sheep, and lain the nights  
On the cold grass, beneath the dew of heaven,  
Methinks this crushing care had never come  
To stifle me, and peaceful days were mine,  
Heart free from sin-stain, life from shame ; but now  
The heavy morrow like a storm-dark sea  
Surges before me, and casts bitter foam  
That tastes like tears, into my eyes, the foretaste  
Of sharper ills to come. When the young lord  
I tarry for comes at my bidding, sure

That I have called him but to take to the walls  
Our meek submission, shall I say him nay?  
The oracles are mute—but yet no sign  
Of evil did they give—maybe no answer  
Meant good in store, but hidden from all eyes!  
Yet, should the people rise up in rebellion  
And cast me out—they love me, no, not one—  
Perchance exalting this same Gedaliah  
To be their head, and treat for them with Babel,  
'Twere not so well! To yield were better far—  
If yield in time—and time is speeding swift——

*(Enter ELISHAMA.)*

ELISHAMA.

My lord the King alone here, on the walls?—  
I have been searching for thee long, but dark  
The night is, and I met no one had seen thee.  
Bear'st thou a braver heart than yesterday?

KING.

Why question me? There is no cause for change?  
The heavens are black above us, and our fate  
So lowers before us, dark and answerless.

ELISHAMA.

Better than divination is good cheer;  
Better than signs and tokens is the hope  
That wavers not with waiting, never sinks  
Crossing the bitter waters of ill-hap.

Keep up thy heart; oh King! Though now all  
heaven

Be black, the morning will come presently ;  
This midnight of our fortunes cannot bide  
For ever, and the sun-blaze and blue day  
Will rise upon us surely, if we wait.

KING.

Waited full long have we, and yet the foe  
That presses us seems fresh and fair as when  
He first threw up his over-peering bastions  
Against our walls, and trained his engines on,  
And ranged his trampling thousands in the plain  
Before our gate ; and when we looked on and saw  
The gleaming whites of thrice ten thousand eyes  
Dart hate at us, and slaughter.—Well know I  
That tireless foe will yet outwait us all.

ELISHAMA.

This craven heart of thine will be the ruin  
Of fair Jerusalem yet, if all my words  
But set the text for bodings of despair.  
Think'st that thy fathers never felt the weight  
Of weary waiting for a help that came not,  
And afterward laughed at their coward fears ?—  
When young Jehoram, of the house of Omri,  
Whose Tyrian mother's blood runs in thy veins,  
Swayed in Samaria, Syrian Ben-Hadad—  
Old was he then, the wine-bibber Ben-Hadad—

Thought to beleaguer him, as years before  
He did his father Ahab ; and marched out  
From green Damascus, his rich paradise,  
With thousands, many thousands, men of war  
And chariot warriors, and laid closest siege  
To lone Samaria in the hills. Days passed,  
And weeks, and months, and nigh a score of months ;  
And darkened in Samaria every eye.  
Then strong men sank with famine, and a moan  
Of dumb despair went up to heaven, when corn  
Was wholly spent, and through the streets at noon  
Went wild-eyed women, fresh from their dark feast,  
And wailing for the babes that were not. Men  
Looked up to the blue heaven then, and doubted  
Whether Jehovah kinged it there or no.  
It fell one evening, as the twilight grew  
Deeper and deeper, and the stars were born,  
Four lepers sat within the southern gate.  
Worn down with hunger and their foul disease  
They only waited death ; when suddenly  
One, starting up, with frenzy in his look,  
Shrieked out : ‘ Why sit we here until we die ?  
Let us go seek the Syrians : they have food ;  
If they should spare us, then we live indeed ;  
If they should slay us, then we can but die.’  
And through the fallen night they took their way  
Down the long hill and over miles of valley



And reached the Syrian outposts, where they  
thought

To be seized on, and brought before the King  
For life or death—but all was wondrous still :  
' The watchmen slumber,' thought they; ' it is well.'  
And they pressed on still farther, through that camp  
Of numberless pavilions, breathing odour  
From scented silken curtains, but so still  
And death-like, that their wonder numbed their  
pain ;

Still they went on, till at the uttermost verge  
Of the great camp they turned, and saw that none  
Was in its bounds, of man. Then hunger came  
And drove them raging to the hoarded food  
In those rich tents, whose ivory tables bore  
The priceless weight of jewelled goblets, full  
For feasting, of the odorous wine of Lebanon,  
Whereon they fed ; and with returning life  
Came greed, and tempted them with the fine gold  
And gem-inwoven draperies, and rich arms  
Strewn on the earth about them ; so they took  
Each what he counted costliest, and hid  
In the rock-clefts. Then hurried they again  
To high Samaria, and the gate-ward told  
How that the Syrian camp was empty, still,  
With horses tied, and asses, but no one  
Of all their foes. The gate-ward told the King

Who, roused at midnight, held it but a snare  
Set by the Syrians to entrap the city,  
Yet sent his messengers to see. They came  
And saw, and witnessed to their lord again  
That all was true. Then rose the famished people  
With one strong shout of gladness, and ran out  
To the camp to plunder wheat and barley, till  
The city flowed with plenty.

KING.

Is it told

Why in such haste the Syrians left their store ?

ELISHAMA.

'Tis even so. The King of Judah came  
By cover of darkness, with his men of war,  
And fell on them, unready as they were,  
And chased them through the many-folded hills  
To the bank of Jordan by Beth-barah's ford ;—  
And it is said moreover in the record,  
That Lord Jehovah made the welkin ring  
With din of chariots, and with tramp of horses,  
As of a mighty host ; and panic seized  
The men of Hamath, ere Jehosaphat  
Fell with his chosen champions on their midst.  
So waited King Jehoram, and so found  
The fruit of patient waiting. So do thou.

KING.

Old man, thy tale is fair ; but what one King

Is there, who would fall, full of victory  
Bought for him by triumphant angel armies,  
On this Sharezer, captain of all hosts  
Which the great King has warring in the west,  
Master of all the delegated power  
Of him who sways our fortunes, as a god  
His wand? Where is the King of Judah now?  
Samaria, and all Israel, desolate  
These hundred years and more—and Salem,  
Our father David's city, which he won  
From strong Araunah and his people, all  
Men of war-sinew, laughing in their strength,  
But yet from even them he reft it, made  
His high home here, and hallowed to Jehovah  
The city for an endless heritage—  
This glory-haunted stronghold of our fathers  
Lies at a stranger's mercy, and her King,  
Like a caged lion, pent in narrow bounds,  
Frets ever at the death before his eyes.  
I will hear hope no more.

ELISHAMA.

Lo, I am old ;  
Full eighty years have I kept passover,  
And longer much I do not think to live ;  
But, by mine age, and by my hoary hairs,  
And by this white beard, that has never known  
The touch of shameful fingers, and these eyes

That are so dim they can no longer see  
To guide the cunning pen in the fair scroll ;  
Yea, by all these, and by the hope I have  
That when I die, I shall not wholly die,  
I swear, young King, that help is very near  
If only thou endure ; therefore be hopeful.

KING.

And who, I pray thee, is to be the bearer  
Of this good help thou talk'st of, and I need  
So sorely ? Where is any strong enough  
And willing, who would break this iron host ?  
My neighbours are all cowering for sheer dread  
In what poor holes they can creep into. None  
Now have the heart to stand by me.

ELISHAMA.

Last night

I dreamed I stood upon the hill of Olives  
Looking to the holy city, and I saw  
Out of the midst a tree of wondrous leafage  
Much like a cedar, grow, and growing spread  
Broad branches out, and shadow all the city.  
Then saw I a great eagle, mighty-winged,  
Come with a rush that made the mountain whirl,  
And snatch at the fair cedar, as it were  
Some quarry ; then I saw, from out the west,  
A mightier eagle swoop upon the first,  
And bear him screaming earthward, till he fell

Prone, and I saw him not. Methinks this dream  
Shews surely help is coming from the west,  
And fall to Salem's render, whose fowl beak  
Shall taste of dust, ere long.

KING.

The dream is vain.

Pharaoh has long forgotten his old bond ;  
Else wherefore has he left me undefended  
To bear the bitter brunt of this fierce storm ?

ELISHAMA.

Say not the dream Elishama dreamed is vain :  
Time was, young King, when my great lord thy  
father

Would hearken to my word, and deem it right  
To follow all Elishama had counselled ;  
Let not the least of all his branches laugh  
To scorn the words he honoured. Nor has Pharaoh  
Forgotten that great oath he swore with thee—  
Ay, by his gods he swore't, and sealed his faith  
With sacrifice—to be thy friend and helper  
So long as thou wert true—mark me, so long.  
And Pharaoh is no craven, though his hands  
Have been of late so busy in repressing  
The tumults of the South, where nimble Cush  
Bites ever, dog-like, at his master's heels.  
Had not his kingly father died ere he

Could follow up his victory, and smite  
The men of Cush with mighty hand, and lay  
The land of Cush for ever at his feet,  
Hophrah of Egypt never would have left  
His leaguèd friend fast in the grip of siege  
And famine ; but his realm to him is dear  
As thine to thee—dearer, should I not say?  
And therefore is he full of anxious cares—  
But not for long, I think ; soon will he come  
To lay this upstart Babel low as she  
Is low, the lordly Nineveh of yore.

KING.

No craven may he be, and yet his strength  
Be but the ghost of the brave heart within.  
Babel has countless numbers—armies here,  
At Riblah with their King, and at the bound  
Of Shinar to the sunrise, watching Elam ;  
To say nought of the many scattered bands  
Here, there, and everywhere, throughout his king-  
dom.

What hosts can Pharaoh have to match all these,  
If his whole might be busy with one war?

ELISHAMA.

They are with him are better far than numbers.  
He has, in sooth, a lordly retinue ;  
No mere beasts these, who when their leader falls  
Turn tail, and fly off faster than they came,

But hearts that stand, each one himself a host,  
Though leaderless, 'gainst overwhelming numbers ;  
And fight on till they fall, thrust thro' and thro',  
Nigh buried in a breastwork of dead foes.

Ay, I have seen their valour ; for I fled  
When I was young as thou art young, the fury  
Of that mad ancestor of thine, King Amon,  
Who filled Jerusalem's streets with holy blood  
And all her homes with sorrow. Mine own life  
(That had but barely 'scaped Manasseh's jaws)  
I knew he sought ; so flew to Mizraïm  
To find a ready helper and defender  
In noble-hearted Psametik, whose blood  
Flows yet in Hophrah's veins. There did I see  
That never-to-be-conquered band of warriors  
From far-off Javan, and the ocean-isles  
Of Elishah—proud of their land were they  
As we of ours ; for they had come, not led  
By their own will, but his who ruled them there,  
Friend to the Pharaoh ; whom, as their own lord,  
They loved and served ; and oftentime I saw them  
And heard their speech—fair speech that flowed  
from out

Their mouths like dashing water, with a sound  
Sweet as the silver horns, what time the song  
Of praise arises, and the Temple fills  
With music. Once with Pharaoh's host I went

In a great galley up the River, far  
As the naked border of the land of Cush,  
Where we found all the strength of Cush drawn out  
In battle order. Pharaoh bade this band  
Charge first to break the forest of keen spears  
Flashing before us ; tarrying made they none,  
But with one bound they charged, and with one voice  
Lift up their lofty song of war, that rolled  
Like summer thunder while the keen storm fell  
Of steel-shaft lightning on their foes. Thereat  
The southern host broke up like chaff before them,  
Chased to the mountain clefts and sandy plains.  
Back came they singing triumph, and would none  
Of weighty guerdon like the others, but  
Only a wreathèd diadem that Pharaoh  
Had wrought for them, what time he went to war.  
Full many thousands Hophrah has of these,  
And these, methinks, are match enough for Babel  
With all his rabble, yell they e'er so loud ;  
No yelling will avail them with the spears  
Of Pharaoh's islesmen at their throats. Even now,  
If visions are not vain, they come.

KING.

Well said,  
And like my fearless counsellor of old !  
Thou comfortest the heart in me anew.—  
Farewell, my father—I will go and rest



And, maybe, sleep—and if I dream of hope  
This counsel will I follow, come what will !

[*Exit.*

ELISHAMA (*alone*).

Farewell, poor weakling of a noble stock ;  
But born, I fear, to drag down guiltless men  
To ruin with thee ! Never art thou sure  
A whole day through, of that unsteady heart  
That wears the leprosy of fear far more  
Than any flush of courage. Well, go sleep !  
Light chance of any dream of hope from out  
That craven spirit. While the dastard crew  
Howl round thy walls, thou sleepest—shame on thee !  
Had I young arms like thine, verily this night  
Would I lead out our bravest at the foe  
Whose dull hearts sleep within their brazen armour ;  
Heavy with wine are they, and feasting ; prone  
The most of them, and open to surprise.—  
But no ; this shadow of a King commands  
That no one stir out from our gates, but all  
Keep close within, and hurl their coward stones  
From off our rampart. Father Abraham,  
That we should come to this !

What strange dull roar  
Is that seems rolling hither from the gate ?  
It sounds like thunder ; but no thunder rumbles  
So near the voice of men. Haply the herd

Of Babel swine are shouting in their feast,  
Wrought to mad heat with wine—or maybe strain  
Throats in hoarse praises of their god.—Ay, now  
It rises yet again !

GEDALIAH.

My lord and King,  
I thirst to hear thy purpose, and fulfil.—  
Elishama here?—Father, I pray thee pardon ;  
I thought to find the King——

ELISHAMA.

No, my young lord,  
Here thou wilt find no King to-night, for he  
Sleeps 'neath his roof in quiet—not in peace,  
Nor ever will, if I have strength to stay him,  
Until such time as Babel is laid low.  
I know thine errand.

GEDALIAH.

What is that to thee?  
'Twould better far become thy hoary hairs  
To press the pillow at this hour. In sooth,  
Night dews are harm to aged limbs—this mist  
That steals on us so surely, is not well  
For thee.

ELISHAMA.

Mock not mine age, thou shameless one !  
Were't not for striplings such as thou, forever

Weakening our King with fool's words, we should be  
Rid of our foes long erst.—But no foes they  
To those are eager servants to their will  
And work their bidding unbeknown.

GEDALIAH.

Wert thou

But younger, that one word would be thy last  
And choke thee in the utterance. Now I know  
Who has been here and wrought on Zedekiah  
With crafty speech, and turned his feeble soul  
From looking on the morning, to the cold  
Grey empty west ; shame on thee for thy pains !

*(Enter MESSENGER, suddenly.)*

MESSENGER.

O woe, forever woe ! Our city's lost !  
Fly, as ye love your lives, my lords, and follow  
Our King to refuge from the terrible foe !

ELISHAMA.

Gasp not there, fellow ; tell thy message, plain ;—  
No foe could pass our gates, except their bars  
Were loosened from within.

MESSENGER.

'Tis even so.

My lord, I will speak plainly, if I can ;  
But grief, and wind-swift striving through the  
streets

With my fell news, nigh choked me. 'Twas the  
people,  
Who, mad for food, they said, flew on the guard  
That kept our gate, and slew them ; then cried, loud  
As thunder, as they shot back heavy bars  
And flung the great gate open, 'Come ye in,  
Ye men of Babel, all Jerusalem  
Is yours, so will ye only give us food !'  
And while they cried, the forefront of the foe  
Poured in, and battered down remorselessly  
The armless people—'twas a sickening sight  
To see, that spear-struck trampled multitude—  
Shouting in laughter like night-prowling dogs  
Redfanged with blood new shed, 'Food wanted ye?  
Ye shall have food in plenty, maybe not  
The sort ye love, but harder and more cold !—  
Cut them down, all !' But when the leaders came,  
And checked them, sternly bidding all beware  
Of killing and of robbing—for throughout  
The merchant-quarter were they spread in ravage,  
Glutting their murderous maws with spoil—they fell  
One by one back into their ranks again  
To wait their leaders' will. I barely 'scaped  
The edge of slaughter, and came breathless on  
To warn the King, who now is gone with all  
His house in fleetest flight. Ye hear them now  
(God help them) picking each one stealthily

His way down yonder valley, by the gardens  
Our lord delighted in in times gone by—  
O woe, that he should ever so forsake them  
To fly far off for life !

GEDALIAH.

Speak truly, fellow,  
And say if thou know'st whither he is gone ?

MESSENGER.

To Rabbath Ammon, so they said, my lord,  
Where he may find sure refuge with King Baalis,  
Already shelterer of many sons  
Of Judah, who have fled there since the siege.

ELISHAMA.

True, true, thou sayest ; for one rebel shoot  
Of mine is there—would he were in his grave !  
I stayed his hand from bloodshed often ; yet  
Held him, I thought to the warrior's duty. Vainly  
I strove, for now he swells that heathen's state  
And rears his violent heart up to all ill.

GEDALIAH.

So ends our valiant master. Fare him well !  
Long enough has he lived, to dig a pit  
Of lasting death for fair Jerusalem,  
And see her lordly turrets tottering in.  
'Tis hard, Jehovah lets such cankers live  
And chokes them not ere birth.—It seems, my lord,

We have not much to look for now, but death,  
Or shame and sorrow, drowning deep. Already  
The end of all draws near.

ELISHAMA.

Talk not of shame ;  
Shame came not where Elishama had breath,  
And never shall. Sorrow I have, how deep  
He only knows, who high in heaven hears  
And mourns for me ; and death I soon shall taste ;  
No bitterness to me, who foot it faltering  
On the grave's edge already, since I die  
Green in the unwithered honour of my fathers  
And crowned with David's fame. When ruin falls,  
As fall it must erelong, and blazing fire  
Kindled by godless hands, on the fair Temple  
Of Him whose servant I have ever been  
And hope to be in death—if any ask  
For Elishama, bid them go seek him where  
The cherubim spread out their wings on glory  
In days that are no more. When thickest flames  
Beat on them, and they shed their golden wings  
To earth, and are not, haply from my ashes  
A steam of goodly savour shall arise  
Even to Jehovah's throne.—Is that I hear  
The tread of armed men ? Now by the blood  
Of holy David, coursing in my veins,  
I will not tarry here, to meet foul scorn

And foulest hands of heathen laid on me,  
Who am as spotless as a lamb decked out  
For the great sacrifice—I will not stay !  
Not out of consecrated ground and walls  
Will I die, but once in Jehovah's Temple,  
Their brutish rage may vent itself on me  
And on my Temple too. The glory gone,  
What need of empty carcass wherein once  
It dwelt, and dwelling lighted all the world ?  
Yet, some faint trace of power may linger there,  
As lingers sweetest odour in the cup  
That once held precious wine. My fair young lord,  
I leave thee to thy friends—and the glad thought  
Of safety bought by treason. Fare thee well !

[*Exit.*

GEDALIAH.

There was the old lion speaking still, through age  
That shook his roar, and in the face of death !  
Spite of his stubborn heart, by mine own soul  
I honour him, and wish him glorious end ;—  
For if aright I know him, nought will he  
Of captive bonds—death rather, swiftest death ;—  
In that I wish him death, I wish no ill ;  
He has lived too long already—long enough  
To drag destruction down on us by braving  
Such as fair words would gain. Yet, since his heart  
Was upright, and no evil harboured there,

Glory, as in his life, be in his death!—  
 Meseems that even I am not exempt  
 From stroke of slaughter, while deep darkness holds  
 Unknown to one another friend and foe ;  
 'Twere well to seek the captains, ere some band  
 Fall on my life.—Ah, who is this, that comes  
 In flowing raiment, and a blaze of gems  
 That glow i' th' torch flame like a heaven of stars  
 This inky night ? His face seems one that I  
 Have seen before—but where ?

*(Enter NERGAL SHAREZER with Soldiers.)*

NERGAL SHAREZER.

What brings thee here,  
 Thou man of Judah ?—Old Ahikam's son,  
 Or else these brands but mock me——

GEDALIAH.

In good sooth,  
 My lord, I am the same—young Gedaliah ;  
 My father was Ahikam, who is dead.

NERGAL SHAREZER.

Ay, now I mind me how we met—long past.  
 Right glad am I, to find mine olden friend  
 Ere harm was wrought on him.

GEDALIAH.

How merit I  
 My lord's great goodwill so ?



NERGAL SHAREZER.

Do ye stand back.—

Now to our friendly tale.—Rememberest not  
Those many kindnesses I had of thee  
When, years ago, I came on royal errand  
Hither, and found warm shelter 'neath thy roof?  
I mind me then thy father was alive—  
Kindly old man and righteous, was Ahikam—  
Who gave me courtliest welcome, bade me eat  
And drink, of all his best ; and a fair bed  
Was spread for me, the fairest that he had ;  
The while his stripling Gedaliah strove  
To cheer my soul with softest speech, and songs—  
Sweeter to me than all the songs of Babel  
Sung from of old, or what of later days  
Hired bards may weave to win their master's smile  
Or scattered purse, or seat at feasting board ;  
I love them not ; with weary heart I hear them ;  
Hoarse as they are with names of numbrous gods  
And reeking with their praises,—sweet as those  
I heard in my fair childhood 'mong the hills  
Of Media—herdsmen sang them in night hours  
To while their watch away.—Boy wert thou then,  
Yet manhood hath not changed thee in my eyes.

GEDALIAH.

Now God be praised, who watcheth evermore  
On us, like loving father on his sons !—

My lord, I little counted on such fall  
Of great good fortune on me, as has brought  
So noble a deliverer. What poor service  
I did thee in years past was but the due  
To every stranger (so our fathers teach us),  
And not done, brings us shame and foul reproach.  
'Tis strange, to praise our songs—thou art no son  
Of Babel or the plains.

NERGAL SHAREZER.

No, thanks to Him  
Whose sacred flame will rise on us to-morrow,  
No worshipper am I of wood and stone,  
And hate their slavish praises. If my will  
Hold good for aught with the great King, this city  
And her high Temple crown, shall feel no touch  
Of violating hands—nor shall true priest  
Or faithful prophet lose one drop of blood.  
Our lord is no mere torturer—though stern  
To such as wrong him, he will never push  
His anger to the bitter end, but ever  
Yields graciously to them that sue him right.  
He loves not war ; the battle crash to him  
Is hateful ; he would have no enemies ;  
But when one shakes the corner of his power  
He turns on him perforce. If that blind King  
Of thine had meddled not with Pharaoh, still  
His throne had stood on peace. The rule of aught

The west encircles must of nature fall  
To one of two, King Hophrah or our lord ;  
If Hophrah gain it, then the realm of Babel  
Trembles from end to end ; but if with us  
The lordship stay, our master's seat is sure,  
And having peace on one side, he is free  
To centre all his strength (with due allowance  
For guard of sunward borders) on his purpose,  
Whereon his soul is set, of rearing up  
Rich palace-roofs, and temples at whose glory  
His fathers would turn pale.—The day when he  
Set forth on this emprise, nigh two years gone,  
I rode with him down our broad way, betwixt  
Its soaring buildings, toward the bridge that leads  
Borsippa-ward. A gloom was in his eyes,  
And he said mournfully, as we sped on  
Past thronging packs of people gathered there  
To shout their lord fair fortune in the fight,  
' How know I if I now cast latest looks  
On this my handiwork, unfinished yet ?  
Maybe ; then who is there of all my children  
Heir to his father's spirit with his crown ?  
If I return not, may not this my city,  
Pride of my heart of hearts, be in her flush  
Of maiden beauty sent the reeling path  
That shelves sheer down to ruin ? Bel forbid !  
Would peace were in my borders at this hour.'

With that he sighed a heavy sigh, and never  
Spake of these things again. But oftentime  
I have seen him sad and silent, and bethought me  
Of those his parting words, and known full well  
How his heart yearns for peaceful home-return  
And a glad people's cries.—

Now, since thy father  
(On whose fair memory rest unending peace)  
Is past all taste of earthly honour, thou,  
Firstfruit of his begetting, for his sake  
And for thine own, inheritest all good  
I would have striven to gain him from our master,  
Governorship of Judah ; if my toil  
At kingly ears bear fruit, Ahikam's son  
Shall lord it so, and triumph on his foes,  
Glad servants then of him they mocked before.

GEDALIAH.

My loving lord, thou read'st my dearest wish ;—  
Not that I would have wronged my king, if only  
His heart had learned submission, bent to law ;  
But when I knew all lost, and he—O shame !—  
In coward flight, meseemed that very well  
'Twould be, could I, who ever sought and strove  
To make his peace with Babel, gain some power  
To cheer my brethren's lot, so starved with ill.  
If, as I deem, some influence with the king  
Is thine—

NERGAL SHAREZER.

He leans upon me, calls me friend ;  
Sets by his side at table, honours me  
Beyond all other lords of his. Doubt not  
My voice with him is able to gain this ;  
Ere many days are past, be fortune fair,  
All, as we wish, shall be.

(*Enter SOLDIERS with the WARDER prisoner ; one speaks.*)

SOLDIER.

An't please my lord,  
We found this man lurking behind a bastion ;  
He moved not when we challenged him, and when  
We seized him, struggled not ; yet kept his eye  
Fixed on us, as a man does in a trance.  
I pray my lord we kill him, for he seems  
Possessed of some ill demon, who mayhap  
Will urge him to fall on us presently.  
We are all one in this.

GEDALIAH.

My lord, this man,  
When our King's father was a child, took on him  
That faithful service, which through every change  
And storm of fortune, he fulfilled till now ;  
Grey has he grown, and weatherbeaten, watching  
For Salem's safety, from this very wall.

Let his dry leaf be left to dangle yet  
A little longer, from the tree of life ;  
Count me his pledge and bond.

NERGAL SHAREZER.

Men, touch him not.

Let him go where he will, and pass this word  
Through all your ranks. No murmuring, quick,  
be off !—

GEDALIAH.

I thank thee from my soul for this good turn ;  
Dear is this man, and reverend, to us all.  
He knew my grandsire Shaphan, and old Amon,  
Josiah's father, served, albeit he got  
Small thanks therefore from that stern slaughterer ;  
And many tales he knows of the old times,  
Dread stories of those mighty ones that held  
The land, what time our fathers swarmed across  
From Moab, such long lengths of years ago ;  
And how lord David lurked in hiding-holes  
For fear of Saul, and darted out in raids  
Of desperate valour, winning sometimes spoil  
And sometimes a fair wife. Then he would tell  
How, in the years gone by, the hosts of Asshur  
Came crashing on the land, in multitude  
Untold as thronging locusts, when they come  
From the hot South, devouring fruit and leaf,

And pay back tears and famine. 'O the woe  
They wrought, those men of Asshur,' he would say,  
'Judah they seared like fire, and furthermore  
Left bitterness in Israel's cup for ever.'  
Talker he was, yet not upon his lips  
But in his bosom's depth, he kept his heart,  
Tear-quick for other's sorrow, alway. Years  
May he live yet, I hope, to serve me well  
As he has served his kingly lords before.  
Again I give thee grateful thanks —

NERGAL SHAREZER.

Not so;

Now are we brothers, and the will of one  
Becomes the other's deed.—Say, who is this  
That with wild eyes and raven hair outstreaming  
Floats towards us like some shadow—none of earth?  
See it comes nearer, nearer——

GEDALIAH.

Hush, my lord;

The prophetess!

NAOMI.

Aye, I have found ye now.  
Quake not, and turn so craven pale, lord Nergal,  
But hearken to my word; and he that shrinks  
Shivering behind thee, traitor, whose foul name  
I know too well, shall listen. Jehovah saith:  
'Albeit I sorely laid My hand on Judah

In just requital for the sin she sinned,  
Forsaking My due praise and sacrifice  
To worship graven blocks of senseless stone,  
Not alway will I punish, and moreover  
Their heathen hands I wrought My judgment by  
Shall not laugh Me to scorn ; but I will side  
With Mine own people, when they purge their hearts  
In pure repentance, as I sided when  
High-hearted Deborah and doubting Barak  
With half a score of thousands at their feet,  
Followed Me to the battle, broke the hosts  
Of Jabin, when that brawling ancient water  
Of Kishon reddened with his bravest blood  
And swept his captain's corpses to the sea ;  
Fought I not then for Israel ? Sang he not  
The triumph-song ? So shall he sing once more.  
Say, Naomi, Jehovah's wrath is wakened,  
And it is coming, coming ; all the havoc  
Ye Chaldees work on this My dwelling-place  
Shall fall on Babel, hundredfold and soon.  
Think not that I, with idle hand in bosom,  
Will see this garden of My earth betrod  
With trampling hoofs to death, and unavenged ;  
Tremble, ye men of Babel, for the days  
Of woe and bitter wailing overhang  
Your heads even now—weep and repent, before  
The hour is past—bring ye meet sacrifice



To this High Place where I have set My Name ;  
So 'scape your brethren's wrath, and save your souls  
Alive.'

Thus saith Jehovah—heed it, ye.—  
Moreover in His visions have I been  
But yesternight—mark ye what I beheld.  
Turn not away, lord Nergal—'tis a thing  
That touches thee too closely ; stay and hear.—  
Meseemed at first I wandered in dark ways  
And found no path—when suddenly I saw  
A line of light like lightning leap across  
The great north heaven—broader and broader grew  
The rift, with ragged edges rolling over  
Like a fire-shrivelled scroll ; the while there fell  
A flood of thunder on me, where I stood  
Full of amaze and fear—who on the wings  
Of that dread roar seemed rising, as a cloud,  
And felt no more, but was, and saw, and heard.  
Now was all heaven one blaze of golden light,  
When with a clang of trumpets terrible  
Came forth supreme Jehovah, chariot-borne  
As for the war. His shield was fringed with fire,  
And in His hand the slaying lightning trembled  
Athirst for death ; four horses spreading wings  
That whirred high over thunder, drew Him on,  
Who strode within a car of sapphire crystal  
Wheeling on flashing flame, that hurtled down

The steep of heaven right royally. Far above  
Rose rank past rank o' th' Mighty, weaponed all  
To the full, and breathing from their eyes fierce  
longing ;

Rank beyond rank below, sworded and speared  
And bearing ruby shields before them, swept  
Down thundering paths amain, while trumpeters  
Shrilled out for onset, all that countless throng  
Shouting the battle-cry in exultation ;—  
Then saw I far below them, in the dew  
Of sleep yet wrapt, proud towered Babel lie,  
Bathed in their light like morning. Peak and roof  
And battlement, edged red with living gold  
Shone out to meet their onset—whereupon  
Rose up a sullen mutter from the Deep,  
And forth from foulest darkness came all gods  
That boast of Chaldee worship, Chaldee praise ;  
Like smoke they struggled up, gathering their hosts  
To battle as they came. Then with a roar  
Like mightiest waters, clothed in mist that breathed  
The shafted death, fell on them all that flood  
Of Lord Jehovah's war—nought did I see,  
But felt the air I hung in thrill and quiver  
When both their vanguards met—and when the  
smoke

Of dreadful battle rolled away, I saw  
Those false gods failing underneath the brunt

Of angel-falchions shooting into Night.—  
Bright Bel I saw, his golden hair all dabbled  
With life-blood newly shed, go flaming down  
Where black gulfs yawned below him—Nebo saw  
Hurled from his temple-home in loved Borsippa,  
Clay-cake and graver clenched in dying hands—  
Rimmon came thunderous, striding cloud, and sped  
Straight at Jehovah's chariot wheels, when fire  
Flew round him clinging—cloud and rider both  
Passed like a mist away and were no more—  
Voluptuous Ishtar, crownless, whelmed in shame  
And deathly pale, fell shrieking—and the Seven,  
The sexless ones who dwell in deepest deeps,  
Wreaking all ill on mortals—spitting now  
Their venom-spite at their own kindred, ranged  
Them on Jehovah's side—to be swift sped  
To death with whistling clamour, ghostly shrill ;  
And all their hosts came showering down upon them,  
Howling in lamentation as they fell.  
Then on the sleeping city——

NERGAL SHAREZAR.

Peace, oh peace !

Maid, I adjure thee by the God thou servest,  
By thine own honour, and thy father's graves,  
Spare me and cease—have mercy——

NAOMI.

Sword and fire

And all the hoarded might of strong destruction  
Wielded by heavenly hands, came raining fast—  
Oh joy! blood-red with wrath the firmament  
Looked frowning down—even now I hear once more  
That splitting shout of victory, that swoop  
Of sword-flames, starting up the cityful  
From sleep to swiftest death—I hear the groan  
Dull and half-smothered, of the godless ones!—  
Jehovah called Euphrates then. Heaven-high  
The river rose, roaring, and shook his mane  
Of waters, like an angry beast—then bowing  
His blue neck, overarching Babel, fell;  
And through the crash of toppling roofs shot up  
The shriek of women, one keen cry; then all  
Was still. I swooned away for very gladness,  
Or seemed to swoon, and woke; yet in awaking  
There came across my ears a sound much like  
The gurgling wash of waters, far below;  
I minded me of Babel's fall, and smiled.

False sprout of Shaphan, whom that grey-beard  
prophet  
Lures at his empty bidding on to death,  
Hearken, I say—beware, the high-set seat  
Bodes ill to thee;—why should I wish thee well?  
Go, quick, and take it! Chaldee, guide the blind;  
Lead to the cliff's edge, bid him dance for joy,  
Then watch thy dear friend diving deep and deeper

Into such gloom thou'd shrink to follow him to!  
Try this same footing after, if thy heart  
Incline thee. Sharpest curse of all the curses  
Have ye of me for farewell!

[*Exit Naomi.*

GEDALIAH.

O my brother,  
It is a terrible thing, when God so looks  
Out at the wild eyes threatening—and such ill  
As my heart dies to think on. Knew I only  
She spoke vain words, and not the baulkless purpose,  
Then might I rest in peace.

NERGAL SHAREZER.

Fie on thee, faint-heart;  
Let not a woman's raving shake thee so;—  
Who is this maid, now tell me—she is gone,  
No need for fear—yet, when she turned far off  
To look on us, how her eyes glittered blue  
Athwart the darkness, keen as winter stars!—  
We can breathe freer now.

GEDALIAH.

If ever life  
Was charged with bitterness from end to end,  
I think 'twas hers—scarce from her mother's breast  
She felt the tooth of sorrow rankle deep  
In her young heart—her father slain in fight

Against the Chaldee, making stand for Salem,  
And with her weary mother she must foot  
That rending road to Babel far away ;  
Mixed with the thronging heap of sorrow urged  
On faltering feet, what time Jehoiachin  
Was swept off to captivity, and Salem  
Bled of her best and bravest, twelve years gone ;  
Soon died the mother, torn from clinging arms  
To grace some Chaldee chieftain's luxury,  
And wild-eyed lonely Naomi, left the sport  
Of burning blasts of hate and gusts that freeze  
Of icy scorn, wore out some wretched years  
And grew up strange and silent, shunning sound  
And sight of man. When twice seven years had set  
Their seal upon her beauty, and her bud  
Of childhood blossomed to a pale rose bloom,  
Some lustful lord of Babel—so they say—  
Cast on her fair sad face his swinish eyes  
And sought to bear her off—but ere the slaves  
Could do their master's bidding, she was gone.  
None found her ever after in those walls,  
But some few months ago, we saw her here  
As now we saw her, wandering unbeknown  
And uttering strangest wisdom and wild speech ;  
And it was told how she had found a shelter  
With merchants of Arabia, in whose train  
She followed far as Riblah, and thence found—

By what wild toil I know not—way unhindered  
Hither. And now 'tis rumoured marvellous visions  
Not unsent of Jehovah—may He grant  
'Tis not so, but vain dreaming—haunt her ever ;  
And truly wondrous light looks through her eyes,  
And in her speech, my heart keeps telling me,  
There sounds a voice that bodes me bitter bale.

NERGAL SHAREZER.

Cheer thee, my friend ; take not such heed of words  
Fallen from a witless tongue. But what a draught  
Of gall i' th' cup of life, for childish lips  
To drain to the bitter bottom ! By the sun,  
My master's warriors work much ill in Judah ;  
Would they were home again, and hands blood-  
stained

But now, were only harvesting in peace  
The corn, our yellow sea, that heaves and rolls  
Waiting the reapers' toil, and fares but ill  
In servant hands, when masters are away ;  
Then might this strife-scorched land of thine rejoice  
In peace and plenteous seasons, bursting barns,  
And gather all her warworn stricken children  
To her broad bosom motherlike, and breathe  
Into their hearts the balm of happy days ;  
Then would thy brethren bless their fair young lord  
And bring him summer fruits, and all due homage,  
And prosper, they and he.

GEDALIAH.

I cannot speak,  
My lord and brother, the rich gratitude  
That wells up from my soul to meet such love ;  
It takes away all utterance.

*(Enter a SOLDIER.)*

SOLDIER.

Good my lord,  
I have foul news to tell.

NERGAL SHAREZER.

What news ? what news ?

SOLDIER.

Spite of my lord's command that none should lay  
Sword or any violent hands on any Hebrew,  
The white-haired priest, the scribe——

NERGAL SHAREZER.

What sayest thou ?  
Dared any slave of mine so scorn my orders ?

SOLDIER.

One of our army followed him within  
The temple doors, and slew him, as he stood  
With outspread palms praying before the altar  
Of incense, so it seems—he took his spear  
And smote between his shoulders, and he fell  
Right on the altar, heart-blood flowing out  
And mingling with hot incense. So he died.  
Lord Sarsechim seized the man, and has him fast



In ward for his ill deed—who sped me here  
With earnest supplication for thy counsel  
In this, and weightier matters.

NERGAL SHAREZER.

Say, I come.—

[*Exit* SOLDIER.

Brother of Judah, if it should so hap  
That any lay a forcing hand upon thee,  
Remember that my name is powerful  
To give free passage anyway, from here  
To Riblah. Furthermore, this signet ring  
Will bring who wears it even to the throne  
Whereupon he that lords this land now sits,  
Nebuchadnezzar, king of kings on earth.  
Take it, and use if need be. Fare thee well.

[*Exit* NERGAL SHAREZER.

GEDALIAH.

And now at last my dearest dream draws near  
Its high fulfilment, and this lovely land,  
Soil of my fathers, sown with bones of glory,  
Nigh mine, for joy or sorrow. Stumbling-stone  
Is none—the bravest, bitterest foe I had  
Slumbers on holy ground. That he sleep on  
In peace, I grudge him not. All hindrance sped  
(For after Elishama no living soul  
In Judah durst oppose his will to mine),  
What else but triumph spread before—what else

But seas of joy for Judah and for me?  
That lion's grandwhelp Ishmael lives, 'tis true,  
Bears me a hate not less—but why fear him,  
Crouched in the tent of Ammon?—Ah, to Baalis  
Methought the slave said King and all his guard  
Were gone—what if it were a cloak to blind  
Our eyes withal, who rise when he is set,  
Yet until then are pale—not lights to guide  
And cheer, but phantom butts of scorn!—Ah, fool,  
Fool that I was to revel in rich dreams  
Of might and glory, while a King yet lives  
Who meditates mayhap a suppliant suit  
To him of Babel—which if once he gain,  
Confusion to our hopes! This plan of ours  
Might never leak out, yet I know no love  
Burns in his heart of hearts to me. Too soon,  
Fool-like, too soon, I reckoned, ere the way  
Was clear before me; if Josiah's seed  
Reach Riblah and gain the Chaldee, all is lost.

*(Enter a MESSENGER.)*

MESSENGER.

Sore news I bring, my lord, sore news and foul;  
The King is taken, and as good as dead,  
And all his captains and his chosen ones  
Winnowed away like chaff before some gust  
When winds are out in summer—but the wheat,  
The chosen corn, the fair wheat and the holy,

Become the prey of spoilers—woe is me !  
The Chaldees took him in the hills, just through  
The pass they call Adummim, half-way down  
To Jericho ; where robbers oftentime  
Have fallen upon our camels, smote and spoiled  
And wrought our city merchants mickle woe ;—  
There burst on him that cloud of clanging arms  
Poured down in thousands from each rock and cave  
And yawning of the mountains, as they trod  
Their weary way beside the torrent-brink  
Roaring not now with waters, dry and dead ;  
Fiercely they fought and long, the King not least,  
Till strength was spent, and sword and spear were  
    broken,  
While for each foe they slaughtered, nigh a score  
Came flooding down upon them in their stead ;—  
When the King saw his young men mostly fallen  
Or flying fast before strange spears, he bowed  
His gracious neck to earth and made his moan,  
(The while the ring of wolfish eyes crept closer)  
Crying ‘ Jehovah, hast Thou now no help  
For Thine anointed King ? That crown Thou gavest,  
Suffer not unclean hands to rend from me ;  
Darken their eyes in their presumption, so  
They find me not, forsaken as I am.’  
But while his lips yet moved, they swooped on him,  
Bound fast, and speedily gat him off, away—

Where, I know not—myself was left for dead  
Among his slain ones, and fetched back such life  
By stress of gasping, as has sped me here  
To tell my woofullest of all ill tales.

GEDALIAH.

This is strange news, and sudden. We must go  
To the Temple court together, where the chiefs  
Of Judah, and some other, sit in council  
Resolving our affairs. Rouse thee and come ;  
Thou shalt be tended quickly, and rewarded—  
Ay, to thy heart's desire. (*Aside.*) Now do I breathe  
New life !

[*Exeunt GEDALIAH and MESSENGER.*

WARDER.

So ran the ancient oracles.  
The prophets fell, whose blood flew up to heaven  
Shrieking for righteous vengeance, long ago ;  
The house of David slew them, and upon  
The head of David's seed a fateful doom  
Hung hovering—even all the great glad time  
God-loved Josiah held just royalty,  
But yet, with all his goodness, could not ward  
The death-stroke off, that fell when he was gone.  
A bitter fall !—But fairer days, though few,  
From time to time were ours, and foolishly  
Judah grew quite forgetful, laughed and sang  
In light contentment, like a wanton child

Upon a pitfall's edge. Too foolish ye  
To dream the eternal oracles could slumber !—  
Yet so it was ; but righteousness could save,  
And purging off that curse of wizard charms  
That brings our great curse downward ! Nevermore  
Will ye, the captives of to-morrow, come  
And nest you in your mountains as of old ;  
Or if ye do, 'twill only be when lords  
Are weary of the hands that yield them toil,  
Or powerless, by some fell calamity,  
To keep their bond no longer. Be it so,  
By high Jehovah, and the Mighty, all !  
Yet 'tis too far for hope. But if it come,  
Rebellious Judah will have learnt too dearly  
What a high shield they slank from, when the witch,  
And star-watcher, and guesser by the rods,  
Lured them from that clear glory wont to fill  
The sacred space, and dazzle holy eyes ;  
And gave but wind in recompense ! Methinks  
If that day dawn, ye will be wiser then ;  
But what a dear-bought wisdom, to lose all  
Ye hold most good, and leave your many bones  
Of old forefathers whitening where the land  
Bred dumb despair and thralldom !

Nevermore,  
Oh David, wilt thou sweep through fairest halls  
With kingly robe around thee, and with blare

Of trumpets, clang of cymbals, song of slaves ;  
 No more will that light soul, like thistle-down  
 Dance on each wave of faction fresh up-puffed  
 By breath of flatterers fawning ; good and ill  
 Both dead for thee—unless (our God forbid)  
 Thou, wretched one, hast 'scaped death, but not  
 shame

Far bitterer—the spurn of scorn, the jeer  
 Of insolent hate—the blighting name of slave !  
 I pray Thee, Lord Jehovah—for I feel  
 Thee still our God, our fostering Father still,  
 Whatso black deeps we wade in—send on him  
 A saving boon of death betime, so he  
 Drain not that withering poison, a slave's life ;  
 Let not the last light twig of David's tree  
 Die decking heathen pride.—

False, flaunting dawn,

Why rises it in rosy robes and gold  
 To laugh the grey night out of countenance ?  
 Peace, wanton, hide that mocking smile of thine,  
 And bid the sun, thy doting lover, tarry  
 Awhile with thee below the hills ; so leave  
 The sons of sorrow in a seemly gloom  
 To taste their heritage !

Still it uplifts

Those flashing curtains for the paramour  
 Who peeps with fiery eye from the green fringe

Of Olivet, and turns dim leaves to gold ;  
A fire about the roots of sentinel pines  
That keep watch over Jordan—burning now  
Even as he did when came glad tidings, lighting  
A blaze of triumph, flung from heart to heart  
And spreading seawide o'er Jerusalem—  
That Nineveh, the Pitiless—our scourge  
And hammer of all the nations—split and shattered  
Lay at her hater's mercy. Then we blessed  
That golden lamp of heaven, that beamed on us  
As though he shared our glee. Far other hour  
Rolls on us now the mocking morning's smile,  
When she, with ashen garments rent in storm  
And gusts of clamorous lamentation ever  
Bearing big tears to earth, should look on all  
This sorrow.—Now meseems it well to go  
Unheard and unbeheld, right out away  
From sick Jerusalem, and stretch spent limbs  
In darkness—rid of this blue mockery  
Of day, this dancing leering ball of fire—  
In darkness, which is very peace, to die. [Exit.





## SONGS OF THE WAYSIDE.



Ψυχὴ γὰρ εὐνους καὶ φρονοῦσα τοῦνδίκον  
Κρείσσων σοφιστοῦ παντός ἐστὶν εὐρέτις.

SOPHOKLES.

Metod eallum weold  
Gumena cynnes,  
Swá he nú git déth ;  
Forthan bith andgit  
Æghwær sélest,  
Ferhthes forethanc :  
Fela sceal gebídan  
Leófes and láthes,  
Se the longe her  
On thyssum win-dagum  
Worulde brúceth. . . .  
Ure æghwylc sceal  
Ende gebídan  
Worulde lifes :  
Wyrce se the móte  
Dómas ær deáthe ;<sup>1</sup>  
Thæt bith driht-guman  
Unlífgendum  
Æfter sélest.

BEOWULF.



# SONGS OF THE WAYSIDE.



## I.

WATCH ! for the night is past, its shadows flee,  
While, azure as the eyes of infancy,

Rises the morning with one hopeful star  
To guide us yet awhile on life's loud sea.

Hold we our way right on, nor suffer aught  
Of fear or of foreboding in our thought ;

The way is clear, and day is near, and we  
Bring the same heart of hope we ever brought.

Only beware we, while the dawn before  
Our bounding prow swells brighter evermore,

Lest at the lulling of a Siren song,  
Our hands grow listless, and let fall the oar.

And though unwonted storms around us rave,  
With hearts undaunted all their fury brave,  
    Bending our eyes upon that beacon-star  
That flashes far and fearless on the wave.

So, when the mists of morning 'gin to pale  
Before the breathing of a balmier gale,  
    That orient roseflush fall on us unscathed,  
Loosing the folds forth of an unrent sail.

And when the unruffled royal harbour we  
Enter, at length from storms and surges free,  
    Haply our bark, if steadfast hands have steered,  
Will bear us after on a sunnier sea.

What says the holy sage, Mark Antonine,  
Brightest and best of all the sceptred line,  
    Who fostered Virtue to her perfect flower,  
And well-nigh linked our human with divine ?

‘ Live not as though thou looked to live for years  
Unnumbered—even now the Must-be nears ;  
    While life is thine, while yet 'tis in thy might,  
Let each day find thee nobler than its peers ;

‘ Be ever mindful, 'mid the whirl of sense,  
Of thine own inmost soul's omnipotence ;  
    Let all thy powers like willing slaves obey  
The mystic Might that bears thee hither and hence.’

So, while we wend across the tide of time,  
Shall from our lonely toiling spring a chime  
Of sweetest music, as the fateful hand  
Smites sternly on our spirit's strings sublime.

For never laurel of the conqueror  
Won as green guerdon of triumphant war,  
But withered with the weary brow it bound,  
But sank with it in dust for evermore.

But they, the Heroes, who have bled and borne  
The loftier conflict, and the crown of thorn,  
And poured their rich life's perfume for all-heal—  
Crowned are with wreaths no conqueror has worn ;

The whole world's wonder, and its burning love,  
Kindling upon their footsteps as they move,  
And blessings breathed of lowlier lips that yearn  
Wistfully on their far fair path above.

For well we know, that out of suffering  
A great and marvellous grace may often spring,  
Flowering not only for the world beside,  
But even for that heart its birth-throes wring.

---

What if 'twere sooth, as in a saddened hour  
Sang Shakspeare, 'how that life was but a flower  
In the spring time ;' if all great Nature's toils  
Bore but one bloom to deck a fading bower ?

The mirage of a rainbow mist that's spread  
Athwart a soundless ocean, dark and dead—

Can this be being, and our little life  
Be rounded with a sleep? So Shakspeare said.

May not we be the sleepers, who lie here,  
Slaves of each flattering hope and phantom fear,  
Coiled in the nightmare chain, Necessity,  
That ever, as we shun it, seems more near ;

And this transcendent canopy of blue,  
Fleece-flecked, that one white star is quivering  
through,

And all the blossoms of the day's pure prime,  
Springing to greet us through their glory of dew ;

The song of morning birds, and all the mirth  
Our mother or foster mother, kindly Earth,  
Murmurs around us when we list to hear,  
Gives as her best of bounty from our birth ;—

All this our being that so steadfast seems,  
Be but the trembling tissue of our dreams,  
Gold-shot or sable, as the lot befall,  
Cloud-bound, or glowing glorious in Love's beams?

If it be so, is not the Dreamer then  
Sole sovereign of that fair world of his ken,  
Wherein he wanders, as its Archimage,  
Wielding at will the eternal Where and When?

'Tis his, who holds this fairy land in fee,  
A heaven of light and love to make it be ;  
Or if in evil hour he will, to shape  
One scathing hateful hell of earth and sea.

Whether we toil across a tide of years,  
Moaned round with wild winds drenched in human  
tears,

Yet sometime breathing in the balmier air  
As high in heaven our sun of Love appears ;  
Or suffer all in dream as sleepers do,  
That deem what thing they seek or shun is true,  
Till, waking, starless Midnight meet their eyes,  
Or sorrow melt in Morn's immortal blue ;—

The end is one, whether we dream or are ;  
The world's work, which is ours, to make or mar ;  
To be and kindle suns of quenchless light,  
Or stoop to darkness as a falling star.

Humanity, unchangeable, eterne,  
Proud peak whereto all Nature's lowlands yearn,  
Of all the measure, and the Measurer—  
Can such for ever cease to breathe and burn ?

Owning, as sun of every age and clime,  
High in its own pure ether throned sublime,  
The everlasting heirdom of the ages,  
The generations far beyond all time ?

---

A boundless spirit bounded for a day  
In close-confining walls of common clay,  
That beats for ever at its bars, and yet  
Half shrinks from soaring when the wall's away ;  
Like butterflies that tremblingly forsake  
The shelter of their sheathings when they break,  
Though breath of Summer lift their wings, and  
light  
Of Summer flood the world whereto they wake ;  
And yet we doubt, and double with our doubt  
The films which blind our eyes to all without,  
That ring of circling foes forevermore  
Drawn balefully our dim-seen path about.  
Though sometime stumbling, still shall we aspire ;  
The evening star that flashed through sunset's fire  
To die in darkness, if our gaze be true  
Will rise the morning star of our desire.  
What if the morrow swell so high before ;  
Each towering billow may, if all the more  
We, like strong swimmers, breast the tide of time,  
Give nearer glimpses of the wished-for shore ?

---

O that we even as we wish, could *know* !  
Thought but adventures far as it may go,  
And leaves us on a dizzy cliff-edge, whence  
We see the boundless whirl of waves below ;



Wild with white wrath the ocean wreaks its will,—  
Whereover bitter winds are whistling shrill,

And all the roaring brink of earth and sea  
Foams like the floodway of some mighty mill.

Yet, through the pauses of the thundering gale,  
A sound, that seems half whisper and half wail,

Is wafted toward us as we listen above ;  
' Pity and Love may pass where Thought will fail.'

And as we hail the omen, and once more  
Wend our way down that steep to Life's dim shore,  
Swells yet one echo of the infinite sea—  
' Pity and Love beyond all Thought can soar.'

---

Wherefore should shame and sorrow follow sin,  
If it be not the lordly voice within

Clanging, like some high-hung cathedral bell,  
Death-dirges on the corpse they carry in ?

Desire and pride and passion overwon,  
Or some dear race of duty meetly run,

Shall not the bell chime out, in joy-notes now,  
Pealing a blissful bridal new begun ?

---

Springs the Life-stream from heights unseen, untrod,  
Where Being's source drinks in the dews of God ;

In sight awhile, as rill and river, rolls,  
Lingeringly lipping many a flowery sod ;

Until the far-off, dark, mysterious sea  
Whose sighing waves we hear, yet cannot see,  
    Welcome the weary waters, and erelong  
To their own heavenly birthright yield them free.

Life ! is it but a sparrow's flight within  
A hall where feast in winter king and kin,  
    That, glad a moment in the firelight, glides  
Thereout once more to the outer dark and din ?

Or may it be the wild unweeting flight  
Of tropic bird caught in some cavern's night,  
    That bruised and baffled in the dark awhile,  
Yet finds its way through gloom from light to light ?

---

## II.

This morning Summer brooded on the sea ;  
The sky above was blue as sky could be,  
    And sunlit billows falling at our feet  
Sang of their coral isles in slumberous glee.

But now all heaven is swathed in sullen gloom,  
And leaden cloudbanks far to seaward loom,  
    While under winds that whirl the withering sleet  
Ocean upgathers all his solemn boom.—

Up! though the storms of winter wrestle yet,  
And troubled seas below in fury fret,

Let us not blindly in the warring days  
The coming truce of God for once forget ;

Carols the redbreast clearer morn by morn,  
White burgeons break upon the awakening thorn,

And in the grass, and on each hedgerow side,  
Delicate daisies one by one are born ;

Soon will the swallow come from oversea,  
Soon will all thickets ring with melody,

And Earth, upspringing from her winter sleep,  
Burst into beauty on each herb and tree.

Were't not for winter, who would thrill beneath  
The kisses of the Spring's caressing breath,

Or long for that deep heaven of her eyes,  
The pledge of Life's day dawning out of Death ?

For ever, since the old world's heart began  
To pulsate with her richest life-blood, man,

Rose the Spring-time as harbinger of hope  
And loosing of long winter's bitter ban ;

For Life knew not herself, in those old days,  
Before the birth of Thought upon the maze,

And Spring and Summer, Fall and Winter, flashed  
To being in the light of human rays.

And so for us, if we have skill to bring  
Sweet out of bitter, and make sorrow sing,  
    Gilding the dusk that gathers with our glow—  
Will break and blossom one immortal Spring.

Even as the holy Mother of old song,  
Reft of her dear delight the winter long,  
    Sprang to glad greeting 'mid the Lenten flowers,  
Forgetting all the sorrow and the wrong.

Mild Mother, dewing with thy tender rain  
Thy boundless brood of root and leaf and grain,  
    Till they are thriven on thy bosom's breadth,  
And clothe them in their glad green life again ;

We greet thy gracious presence, and we know  
That whatsoever dust be hid below,  
    Nameless or noble, might of thine may make  
Beautiful roseblossoms on that earth to blow ;

Till what seemed dust of darkness and despair,  
Transfigured into a creation fair,  
    Awakes to win the whole world to its love,  
And with its fragrance fill the whole earth's air.

So might we, Mother, while the day is ours,  
Shape in our formless sorrow as it lowers  
    Some bow of promise for a brother's eye,  
Some beauty blooming unto unborn hours.

---

Unending murmur of the sleepless sea,  
What is the burden that thou sing'st to me,  
Wert ever singing from thy being's birth,  
And yet shall sing in all the years to be?

Thou ever changeless in a changing earth,  
The wonders thou hast witnessed from thy birth,  
Had we the wit to spell their secret out,  
No wisdom were for us of better worth.

Time was, when rolling round the molten world,  
A veil of clouded vapour thou wert hurled,  
Lit under by the lurid lava-glow,  
Above in many a billowy mountain curled ;

Yet through all clashing conflict, and the throes  
Of earth, whence rock-hewn continents arose,  
Thou ever swelled and sank, and changeless saw  
Earth's summer noontides and her winter snows.

The endless round of being and of breath,  
The loftier life that springs from lowlier death  
In fish and reptile, bird and beast and man—  
Is this thy song, O Sea that murmureth ?

Who is to spell the secret ? Who can say  
Whether the world has flung her youth away,  
Or, ever mounting with each morning's sun,  
Life presses on to a diviner day ?

So may each woe, each seeming-wasted life,  
Become an unseen factor in the strife,

And lives in Earth's far future sweeter be  
For all the bitter wherein ours are rife.

The wild thyme blooms, and never shows its worth,  
Couching so lowly in its meadow earth ;

But when its life is trampled by rude feet,  
The soul of all its beauty springs to birth.

---

The winds are well-nigh sleeping ; overhead  
A wintry moon, with half her splendour spread,

Amid a ringing glory sits, and showers  
Her light upon the living and the dead ;

The eye of night, that shrined in heaven's clear height  
Fires with her beaming glance this brooklet bright

Down-dancing to the yellow moonlit sea,  
Till every ripple leaps in living light.

Yet other moons shall hang in heaven, and pour  
Their light, when you and I shall be no more,

Shall flash in dew-blooms and in love-lit eyes  
With all their glory of the years of yore ;

So, as the years roll on, the ages roll,  
Nor you nor I shall be, for mirth or dole ;

But fall like raindrops in the stormless sea,  
And sink our sundered being in the Whole.

---

We feel, that whatsoe'er of good be wrought  
In deed or word, in suffering or in thought,  
Is not an aimless working, but a pulse  
Of one great soul that throbs in All and Aught.

The Good? how shall we gauge it? one will say;  
Since unlike natures unlike laws obey,  
And some hold good what others deem but ill,  
Their aims as wide asunder as Night and Day?

Varies the goal of striving but in name;  
Man's end were one, from whatso point he came;  
His Good abides as Heaven invariable—  
Sunlit or starlit, evermore the same.

And that best Good whereafter all men yearn,  
Whereto in worship all earth's noblest turn,  
Is neither Might nor Law alone, but both  
Sphered in a Love that must for ever burn.

---

III.

Strange, in the heaven pure Pindar sang to be,  
And that of John's unmastered mystery,  
Song should be symbol of all souls' delight  
In quiring feast or by the crystal sea;—

And yet not strange, for ever since the dawn  
Of life in leafy lair and river lawn,

Young hearts have leaped in singing, and therewith  
Round wintrier souls a wreathing sweetness drawn ;

From warble of bird to mightiest human tone,  
A diapason, whose master-chord is one,

Runs, chiming with one harmony unheard,  
Speech of all joy, and solace of all moan.

And he who hearkens not, and never heeds  
When in his ear the charmed utterance pleads,

Is as a dead man, who beneath his turf  
Sleeps deaf to all Spring's singing in her meads ;

And though bright blooms are breaking overhead,  
Lies none the lightlier in his narrow bed ;

And while Heaven's air throbs thick with richest  
song

May never taste Life's banquet round him spread.

Was it the hymn of worship or of war  
That first broke silence in the years of yore ;

Was melody born of a victor's boast,  
Or trusting hearts that bowed their God before ?

Surely were it the joy of peace, not strife,  
That first struck music on the strings of life ;

The rose it is, and not the thorns, that yields  
The scent that kings all sweets in spring-tide rife.



Woke that voice first to life in Indian woods,  
Or in the lordlier mountain solitudes,

Uprolling with the wreathing incense smoke  
Where god-like calm for aye in azure broods?

Perchance, in seeking some one holy name  
Beseeching Might forevermore the same,

Men struck on earth that spark which was to be  
Seed of an inextinguishable flame?

Maybe all music that the earth has known  
Is but an echo from that ocean blown

Which breaks upon this shoal of birth and death,  
Whispering of isles and continents unknown;

So, as we scale majestic height past height  
Of harmony, with all our soul's dear might,

Each springing step lifts nearer to the land  
Of matchless music and immortal light.

We know not whether it be so, or no;  
Yet surely feel we, when our spirits flow

With some divinest chord in unison,  
Life were a mocking lure, if 'twere not so.

---

As song was deemed joy's soul in spheres above,  
And harmony the law whereby they move,

So through all crags of circumstance 'twere well  
Our life leapt rhythmic to the law of love;

And sweetlier will the singing waters roll  
For all the bitter battle-brunt they thole,  
    As vanquished discord yields that master-chime  
Which rounds mute music in one perfect whole.  
For streams that spring from loftiest founts, and fall  
In cataract over sheerest mountain wall,  
    Weave them rich rainbows of their glittering  
    wrack,  
Robe their green glens in loveliest blossom-pall.  
Better be scattered wide in sunlit spray  
'Mid the pure peaks and golden glows of day,  
    Than glide unruffled through rank lowlands, and  
Be blackened in the world-thronged waterway.

---

Across the waste of years, a weary while,  
Behind our path slow lengthening mile on mile,  
    We wander lonely and companionless  
Till heart meets heart and greets it with a smile;  
Even as a journeying Arab, parched and worn,  
Toils between skies that blaze and sands that burn,  
    Till at the day's red end his weary eyes  
Light on those groves and wells wherefor they yearn;  
And with the palm-wings waving overhead,  
Beneath, a couch of odorous herbage spread,  
    Lying in calm delight he nigh forgets  
Those many lifeless leagues he has to tread ;

For all the toils he underwent before  
His harbour in that blossoming islet's shore,  
Seem but the dusky frame wherein is set  
A Heaven its gloom enhances evermore.

And rising ere the dawn lift on his way,  
Freshly his heart, through all the withering day,  
Lies in the dews that fell on it erewhile  
When he beside the bubbling waters lay.

---

Was it the Master argumentative,  
Nursed in all wisdom that the world could give,  
Who out of his own human heart yet cried,  
'Were't not for friendship, who would care to live?'

No thing to measure by mere social band,—  
Caressing lip, or grasp of greeting hand;  
But sudden sympathy from heart to eyes  
Flashing of kindred souls that understand;

Even as a beacon blaze from height to height  
Leaps across leagues of lowland lulled in night,  
Whose misty bournes and slumbering thorps are  
blind  
To track the passage of that pilgrim light.

---

May it not be, that as from simplest seeds  
This manifold wonder of the world proceeds,  
    From out the jarring faiths of all mankind  
Will spring one worship that shall crown the creeds ;  
And so, as knowledge grows, and brotherhood,  
And bloodshed dies i' th' kinship of all blood,  
    From the old jangling strings shall rise at last  
The grace of all earth's gladness in one Good ?

Would we might see the dawning of that day ;  
Myriads of years, mayhap, will pass away  
    Ere our eyes through far children's eyes behold  
The roselight of that Easter ridge the gray ;

And yet by self-surrender we may wing  
The circling choir of centuries that bring  
    Or soon or late one Morn of our desire  
That all Earth's songsters sang and still shall sing.

---

'Tis likely, when light wreaths and wraiths of things  
Come flocking for fit echo on the strings,  
    That fingers oft should falter,—so of grace  
Forgive the singer for the song he sings :

And if these notes seem nothing but the spray  
Cast upward in some idle billow-play,  
    Shut ye and shelve his weary book, and wend  
With gladdened heart on some more gleeful way.

For not to every hearer's ear are sweet  
The stammerings of a tongue that may repeat  
    But one clear tone in changeful darkling guise,  
And no one clothed in music that is meet.

---

## KALLIRRHOE.

IN old Pausanias, the volubic,  
Lately I lit upon a tale of love,  
Shining, a short sweet idyll, in his book,  
As gleams in glittering quartz a vein of gold.  
And this is how the traveller tells his tale :—

In Kalydon, by old Lycormas' stream  
Hurrying his gold sands seaward evermore,  
Lived long ago a maiden and a man.  
Koresos, priest of Holy Dionyse,  
Worshipped him daily with pure prayer, and when  
The folk of Kalydon kept festival,  
Held foremost office in the sacred hours.  
Kallirrhoe—blue Dawn had looked on her  
And kissed her sisterly, and oftentime  
Had Helios swathed his splendour in a mist  
To gaze with mellow glances in her eyes—  
She, maiden sweetness of all Kalydon,  
Turned lovelessly from Koresos away ;  
And all his pleaded vows, and all the host

Of common acts by love made beautiful,  
Seemed but to closer shut her heart to him.  
At last, despairing, in a suppliant garb,  
He laid his grief at Dionysos' feet,  
Only beseeching him, the Beautiful,  
To hear and help, if such should be his will.  
Straightway a wonder lit on Kalydon ;  
Strange madness seized the people, such as when  
On the great festal day the Bacchic bands  
Whirl dancing in a frenzy all divine.

They sent to far Dodona, where nightlong  
The barefoot seers sat watching for a sign,  
But nought was given until the third night came.  
Then from the old prophetic oak they heard  
Mysterious murmur, and the cauldron's clang ;  
And with the morning came the oracle.  
' The god was wroth, that faithful love and long  
Should be so spurned and mocked in mere despite ;  
His plague should tarry, till Kallirrhoe  
Or other in her stead, be led and laid  
A stainless offering on his altar-stone.'  
Sadly the seekers turned to Kalydon,  
To tell their story while the city wept.

But now the day was come, and all the hests  
Of dark Dodona duly done, but one ;  
Still there was none the fearful maiden found

Of all her kinsmen, who would die for her—  
For father she had not, nor mother now—  
And so, with laurel wreathèd in her hair  
And draped in royal robe of sacrifice,  
Pale, and her heavenly eyes with tears still wet,  
She came, with mourning convoy virginal,  
To Dionysos' altar and her death.

They bound, and on the altar laid the lamb  
Devote to purge the plague of Kalydon,  
And gave the knife and cup of holy wine  
To Koresos—who bade the people pray  
The god be pleased with willing sacrifice.  
Then, casting light libation on his hair,  
And quaffing, 'This be dedicate,' he cried,  
'To Dionysos and to Love.' Whereat  
In his own heart he sheathed the knife, and sank  
Breathless and smiling on the altar-stairs.  
Then on the maiden came in mighty flood  
The love that she had never known before,  
And rich remembrance of those prayers of his  
Unheeded, breathed at many eventides ;  
And all her heart went out unto him dead.  
'A perfect sacrifice !' the seers proclaimed,  
Unbound and led her home—but longing love  
Drew her, before on Kalydon the blush  
Of dawn came crimson, and the city woke,



Where wells from shadowing rock a fountain forth  
Hard by the haven's brink, therein to still  
Forever all her griefs and her. And so  
The people gave the well another name,  
And called it Fairest Flood, Kallirrhoe ;  
And often, when a traveller stops to drink,  
The white-haired fathers, while he rests him there,  
Tell how a man for love once dared to die,  
And how a maiden followed him in death ;  
Adding that after, as the years went by,  
The folk of Kalydon sent heralds forth  
To far Dodona to the oracle ;  
And how, when they had importuned the god  
As to the lovers' lot, this answer came :  
' Homeward return, and trouble me no more ;  
Koresos and Kallirrhoe are well.'

## LYKOPHRON.

IN happy Korinth, in the olden days;  
When the great house of Kypselos had rule  
In Periander, second lord, there fell  
A mighty sorrow on people and on lord.  
For he, the fameful chieftain, had two sons ;  
The elder witless as a new-weaned child,  
The younger keen and wise, and strong of soul.  
And they, the heir and who the heir should be,  
Going to Epidauros with a guard  
To greet Lord Prokles there, their mother's sire,  
Had met with warmest welcome, and had come  
Back to fair Korinth and their father's hall  
Amid all joyful clamour of the crowd.  
But never, from that hapless hour till now,  
Had Periander from his younger son  
Got gleeful smile, or even a cloudless gaze ;  
And him, the hope of each Korinthian heart,  
Moving among his friends in mournful guise  
And greeting courtesies with a desperate calm,

Had Periander in his rage forbid  
The court, and every roof-tree of his peers,  
Who yet received him gladly, when none saw ;  
(For lord beloved of noble and of low,  
Head of all youth at haughtiest contests he,  
And crown of sunset cheer and festal song ;)   
Whereat the tyrant bade his herald cry,  
' Whoso hereafter shall be seen to speak  
Or walk with Lykophron, or welcome him  
Within his doors, shall pay Apollo's shrine  
Ten talents as a holy penalty.'

Yet Lykophron grieved not thereat, nor sought  
Of friend or fellow shelter any more,  
But gliding sometime through the busy street  
And market—trafficked in of all the world—  
Alone and unaccosted, yet revered ;  
And sometime in the shadeful avenue  
Of porch or peristyle, he passed his days ;  
Sleeping at night where chance had cast him down.

Lord Periander, as he one day came  
Down to his townsfolk from the citadel,  
Happened upon the selfsame portico  
Where Lykophron lay foodless and unkempt ;  
And seeing who was his darling once, so steeped  
In misery, melted all the father's heart,

Crying with quivering lip, 'Wherefore dost thou,  
Who might'st have had my wealth and realm in fee,  
Choose rather a beggar's life? Implacable  
Wert thou, if for—mischance that once befell,  
Thou heap a bitterer on my hoary days.'  
But no word answered Lykophron but this :  
'Go, pay what penalty the god demands,  
Having forbidden speech with one outlawed.'  
And turned and calmly flung him down again.

So baffled Periander, hopeless now  
Of any reconciliation, sent  
Him with fit convoy to Korkyra's isle,  
Whereover his rule stretched. And year by year  
The pale proud exile grew in love with all,  
And Periander 'mid his gold grew grey  
With grief.

For foolish Kypselos, beset  
By many questions, turned this way and that,  
At last had called to mind old Prokles' word,  
Whispered at parting while they rode before :  
'Know ye not, sons, whose hand your mother slew ?'  
Which saying he laid not then to heart at all,  
Not understanding.

But in Lykophron  
The word had sunk, and split his heart in twain ;  
For the old tale in Korinth widely went

That meek Melissa, lady of the land,  
Had suddenly died in flower of all her days,  
Just as her two bright buds had broken sheath ;  
And no one knew how fate had fallen on her,  
Of all who strewed the bier with blooms and tears.

And so slow Vengeance hovered, and then fell.  
The light of life had set for Lykophron,  
And bitter recollection of old crime  
Stung Periander as a serpent's tooth.  
In one mad fit of fury he had marched  
Out, with a host of picked and seasoned men,  
Laid siege to Epidauros, land and sea,  
Starved her into surrender, battered down  
Her towers, and taken grey-haired Prokles home,  
To languish in dark walls his few faint days ;  
Yet never ease came to his heart thereby.  
At last, sheer wanhope wearying strong pride  
(Since now his old age lowered on him), he sent  
Across the leaping blue to Lykophron,  
Seeking return ; but he deigned not one word  
Of answer. So maimed Hope drooped wing again.

When half a score of months was measured full,  
And still no message came, bethinking him  
Of what the sweetness of a sister's eyes

And pleading lips might work, he bade his one  
Fair flower, and mirror of her mother lost,  
Go with a reverend escort to that isle  
Where lay his hope and heart. So, dutiful,  
She went ; and all the spirit of her house  
Leapt to the deep blue eyes, as eagerly  
She sought to win her brother back again ;  
Telling of all the evil that would fall  
If death should come, and the rich house be left  
Prey to such wolves as whetted white teeth now  
In Korinth—while he might unasked have all,  
Did he but come, healing not ill with ill.  
But never, he said, in Korinth would he step  
So long as Periander lorded there.  
So the sad maiden, sable-stoled, returned  
Freighted with heavy tidings.

Whereupon,

Periander, knowing retribution meet  
For him had come, and he must yield to gods,  
Sent forth the sacred herald of his house  
(Who erst had served his father Kypselos,  
What time he grasped the city's helm, and swept  
Her weak and withered pilots to the sea)  
With kingly gifts, and tender of all power  
In Korinth, and the key of treasuries,  
If he would come, and rule there in his stead ;  
Himself resolved to yield up all, and bide

Henceforth upon the isle of crags, content.  
And now, with few old lords that clung to him,  
He waited in the harbour for a sign  
(White ship-wings flapping in the broken breeze)  
So he should pass, and Lykophron return ;  
But when the long black hull dropped anchor there,  
No lordly freight it bore, nor word, but this :

‘ The commons of Korkyra, when they knew  
Their darling going, and the tyrant theirs,  
Maddened to lose and maddened more to gain,  
Had risen and slain him in their fear and love.’

So ancient Vengeance, ripening in due time,  
Fruited to better fulness ; and thenceforth  
The house of Kypselos, that had so high  
Borne up its prow against all tides of fate,  
Stooped on her whirling wheel to helpless fall.

## D O R N R Ö S C H E N.

IT fell in time forgotten, far away,  
When flood and field yet owned the fairy sway.

Glad were the folk, and glad the rose-red morn,  
And glad was every bird that sang in thorn ;

For the fair boon so long besought had come,  
And childish laughter lit the kingly home.

From every thorp and township, far and near,  
The people came to taste the palace cheer.

And since the sweet one in Midsummer's glow  
Was given, when loveliest roses bud and blow,

They called her Rosebud ; and the fairies whom  
The King and Queen had bidden that day to come,



Show'ered on her all their gifts of luck and love ;  
One gave her goodness, one a beauty above

All mortal maidens beautiful before ;  
One wealth, one wisdom ; and—what could she  
more ?—

The last gave grace of lordly love unknown,  
One day to come and clasp her for his own.

But one who dwelt far off, and was forgot,  
Came at the last ; and albeit she might not

Undo the dower her sister fays had shed  
So richly on the new-born golden head,

Shrieked, as she stamped her tiny foot in rage,  
' She'll wound, ere she be sixteen years of age,

Her finger with a spindle, and so die.'  
Then flew a raven out with boding cry.

The others might but murmur, through 'their tears,  
' Not die, but slumber for a hundred years.'

Near sixteen summers fled, and Rosebud grew  
More lovely with each dawn that lit the blue,

And kingly suitors thronged from every land  
To win the peerless wonder of her hand.

Yet none the less her courteous cold disdain  
Sent each one sorrowing toward his home again ;

It seemed her heart like a hid blossom lay  
Waiting the glow of some yet unseen day.

It chanced one morning, left awhile alone  
In that great vaulted chamber of her own,

She tired, and rambling through long corridors  
And quaint forgotten rooms whose cumbrous doors

Swang after her with an ill-omened boom,  
Came suddenly upon a turret room

Where sate a wee old woman spinning swift  
White wool, that lay about in feathery drift,

With what to her seemed strangest thing on earth,  
Who never had seen spindle since her birth.

Childlike, she begged to touch the golden thing,—  
When all at once the chamber seemed to swing

Around her, and she sunk in slumber deep ;  
And with her all the castle slept that sleep.

Straightway around it, says the olden tale,  
There sprang a hedge of thorn-boughs like a pale ;

Higher than tallest poplar tops it grew,  
And past its rampart no bird ever flew.

Many a Prince from far away was fain  
To break the magic circle—but in vain ;

The thorn trees clasped him round with cruel arms,  
And few 'scaped free with less than deathly harms.

So that the fearful fame of it flew wide  
And scared all comers from the country side.

\* \* \* \* \*

A hundred winters now were come and past,  
And of a hundred summers shone the last.

One morning broke so brightly, 'mid such glee  
Of bird-throats thrilled from blossoming tree to  
tree,

And such a flowerful fragrance in the air,  
Folk said no day had ever dawned so fair.

All life seemed flushed with gladness to the brim,  
And even the threatening thorns looked not so grim.

That day a knightly traveller, passing by,  
Halted his horse the enchanted castle nigh ;

He heard the greybeard fathers tell the tale,  
Then straightway doffed his helm and glittering  
mail ;

And a strange gladness seemed to surge and sing  
Within him, as he reached the fairy ring.

Thorns changed to flowering laurels, as he pressed  
His way through that deep thicket's yielding breast,

And white and blue and golden blossoms sprang  
Beneath his feet, and loud before him sang

One bird of plumage wonderful, who seemed  
Guiding him where the castle's darling dreamed.

Across the court, and through still corridors  
Flew on the bird ; and as he flew, the doors

Swang wide before them noiselessly, till they  
Reached the high turret room where Rosebud lay.

She seemed but newly fallen asleep ; an air  
Of summer from the casement stirred her hair,

And shadowed sunlight fell thro' vine-veiled bars  
Around her wreath of lily and jasmine stars,

And lit the beauty bathed wherein she lay  
Like a shut blossom waiting for the day.

Soft sang the bird ; the kneeling knight beside  
Lift to his lips one white hand of his bride,

When suddenly oped the heaven of her eyes  
And smiled upon him with a glad surprise ;

And rose-lips murmured, ' Wherefore, love, so long  
Wert thou a coming ? ' Whereupon the song

Of that strange bird rang wondrously through all  
The castle—and King awoke in council hall,

Suitors awoke who sought his justice there,  
And boy and man ; and ' mid her garden fair

Awoke the Queen, while all her maidens round  
Stirred from their slumbering on the lawny ground ;

And the great clock, clanging the hour of noon,  
Woke the old echoes from their century's swoon.

All sounds of life grew busy, and the din  
Of making and of moiling hummed within.

That summer noon the lordliest and the least  
Kept Rosebud's birthday and her bridal feast ;

For strong love born to break the spell was come,  
And elfin laughter lit the kingly home.

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## S H E L L E Y .

‘ The prophetic soul  
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come.’

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THE world was old and dying, and the gloom  
Of long life fading held an iron sway  
Upon the sunless ether ; for the doom  
Foreshadowed in her weary past, hung grey  
And ghostlike on her wan and wasted strand,  
And spirits that had filled her prime  
With mighty melodies sublime,  
Were past for aye and faded, lost in wastes of time,  
Gilding the sunlight of a sweeter land ;  
Leaving all lustre of their mortal name  
Close-cherished in the worn and ancient hand  
Of Earth their mother, an undying flame ;  
But now all beauty and melodious chime  
Were dead and silent, and a living shame  
Crept on the world and hid the lustre of their fame ;

When suddenly, with an upspringing flame  
Like lightning from the mist-enshrouded hills,  
Thy tameless universal spirit came  
Into the gloom as the sun comes that fills  
The heavy drift of dawn with orient blaze ;  
And through the heaped clouds that hung  
Above the fainting earth, thy song  
Broke forth in pealing thunder-echoes, worldward  
flung,  
And threw the clear calm light of olden days,  
The shadeless glories of the days to come,  
Upon thy mother Earth ; and then the haze  
That so long had becanopied our home,  
The deep-set sorrows that the world's heart wrung,  
Stole with still footsteps to their ancient gloom,  
To lie for ever wrapt in a forgotten tomb.

Flushed with the fire of old Philosophy,  
Earth's supreme aureole in the primal years,  
Bent thou thine inly-thrilling prophet eye  
Past all the strife, the craven doubts and fears  
That thicketed our common earth with weeds,  
And in the rich supernal glow  
Of thoughts that from the world's heart flow  
Into the looming future fraught with weal or woe,  
. And all the hopes that spring from thought-set  
seeds,



Thou centredst all thy young life's blossoming;  
Facing all fury of the hateful creeds  
That sought to numb thee with their venom'd  
sting

And stay the mighty spirit's riverflow ;  
Cleaving thy clear way with unwearied wing  
Through world-wide wastes of bitter tears and  
sorrowing ;

But not in thy heart, O strong bird of gladness,  
Lingered for long time any shaft of pain ;  
Flashing from grief-clouds, with a thunderous  
madness

Rich rolling round thee, sang thou yet again,  
Storming the calm heights of thy spirit's world  
With so intensely sweet a strain  
That listening is almost pain ;  
Flooding our nature over as rich thunder-rain  
Floods the parched meadows whereon it is hurled  
From off the lead-cliffs of a cloudy land ;  
Curling in white wrath as great waves are curled  
In the wild might of ocean's angry hand,  
Fierce-breaking on a bleak and lonely main ;  
Songs that shall break forever, amid Love's  
band,  
Upon the bluffs of ages and the world's wide  
sand.

But now, enfolded in the clear white glow  
Solemnly flooding all Eternity,  
Throughout whose shadeless deeps upthronging flow  
The never-ending heart-sprung harmony,  
The soul-outpouring of the stars of thought,  
Far past all touch of bitter tears,  
All bale and dole of earthborn years,  
A sunlike soul thou gleamest 'mid thy starry peers ;  
Winging that song Earth comprehended not  
While thine own present spirit she possessed ;  
That sea-flood depth of tone that sages sought  
In olden time to summon at their hest,  
Now rolls its rich diapason on their ears,  
Now casts a flameful beauty on their rest,  
Breaking in mazy volume from one mastering  
breast.

Some veiling dimness shrouds thee from our eyes,  
And mindful sorrow floods them deep with tears;  
Grey gulfs of ocean tempest-wrought arise  
Like some weird vision of our night-fed fears,  
Green-gleaming bitter surges, whirlwind-driven,  
Rich with the thunder of white death,  
Blasting with their sea-cold breath  
All the bright morning promise of the young bud's  
sheath ;

But that dear outflow of supreme song given  
To be thine everlasting aureole,—  
That crowning joy of all the glow of Heaven,  
Shrined is for ever with thy stainless soul ;  
And blazing from afar, like stars on death,  
That strange deep songtide roars in Titan-roll,  
Filling far worlds of love beneath thy heart's  
control.

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## REQUIESCAS IN PACE.

En Memoriam, A. E. P. ob. April, 1876.

YEA, thou may'st wander far on gleaming strands  
Drenched in primeval azure, on the sands  
Of that fair covert where thy shadow lies,  
Thrown like rich sunglow ; while o'er thee uprise  
Great shapes of strange calm beauty, and gaze upon  
Thy transcèd form, filling awhile thy lone  
And barren sleeping with some golden dream,  
Flushed in the moon of sadness, and the gleam  
Of old-world glories that are living still ;  
Still, still they live : the ages pass and fill  
The limbo of Time with overgone regrets,  
But their sun-orb of beauty never sets—  
Even now is shedding his immortal beams  
Upon thy spirit's face, where, lapt in dreams  
And starry thoughts of aught may thee betide  
In that rich kingdom, thou dost stilly bide

The eve of future splendours and delights.  
Surrounding thee with curious eyes the sprites  
Of that rare country watch thy sleeping face,  
And wiping fondly from thine eyes all trace  
Of pain-wrought passing tears, embalm thy head  
In deathless odours, drawn from blooms that shed  
Their ever-vernal sweetness through that land.  
And thou, deep-sleeping, hearest not the grand  
Uprising choral harmony from far,  
That rears rich billows to the ocean star,  
And floods the faery woods that environ  
Thy dreamful resting-place, with singing moan ;  
Songs that were born in elder worlds, and rose  
Triumphantly from silent deathlike close  
Ere those old times were ended, echo now ;  
Over thy head they stay their streaming flow,  
And heap their throbbing pulses on thy brain ;  
But still thou heed'st them not, in vain, in vain  
Their chordings tremulous intoxicate  
With volumed sweetness all who listening wait  
Till thy long slumber shall be past for aye.  
Still, as the dawn-glow blossoms into day,  
And night's dun shadows fade in air and die,  
Yet richer scenes and rarer meet thine eye  
So deeply sunk in weary sleep, and pain  
Not yet enloosened from thy heart and brain ;  
And starry eyes are bent on thine, and gleam

Through veiling tears, from far blue depths that  
seem

The morning-flooded vistas that uplead  
The soul to that far heaven enshadowèd  
Beyond the love that drowns their nearer glow ;  
And haply in the joy of that dreamflow  
Thy thirsting spirit may find restful calm,  
And drinking in the dear and healing balm  
Of that sweet presence, may enfolded lie  
For ever in love's immortality.

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## ÆTAS NOVA.

NEW-COMING years had borne the old away  
Into the glooming shadows of dead Time,  
And Life was young, fresh-born, and rich in joy.  
Strife, clanging discontent, and sickly hate  
Had sunk beneath the load of springing love  
And friendliness, now blossoming in their stead ;  
Still, faint remembrance of the dark time gone  
Lingered in human hearts, and from their gloom  
Made the new ages richer in their eyes.  
Old gods were gone ; and in the garden-world  
They were gods only, who brought deeper hues  
Of beauty, grander bursts of supreme tone,  
And spread and poured them forth for human weal.  
Glad-eyed as children, filled with power of joy  
Beyond all highest craving of the past,  
They trod the old earth glorying, and saw  
Through the calm night shot through with trembling  
stars

The swift still rush of planets like their own,  
Whirl-hurried round the centre-blaze of fire ;  
Broad homes of happy life, on earth, in air,  
Or basking in rich caverns of blue sea ;  
Deep-drenched in orange dawn, or growing grey  
Beneath the blood-red blaze of setting suns ;  
And teeming through with life hues, like their  
own;—

Greeting and parting, evermore beheld  
Each in his fellow's eyes gleam deep and wide  
The sunfire of that gladness that had fallen,  
Free from all stain, fresh on the newer age.

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## OCEAN-IDYLL.

THE tempest is singing  
A song that ends never,  
And tones of emotion  
Are borne on its breast ;  
Fresh harmonies flinging  
With wildest endeavour  
Their light o'er the ocean,  
Sink into their rest.

White seabirds are winging  
Their way through dark weather,  
In wild wheeling motion  
Each one to his nest ;  
Around them is clinging,  
And binds them together,  
Impassioned emotion  
The storm has impressed

On birdlike affections  
Upsprung in the heart  
That beats in bird-bosoms  
So blithe and so free ;—  
And spray-built erections,  
Gleam tinted with dart  
Of bright scaly blossoms  
Upshot from the sea,

Are rising and falling,  
Are sparkling with light,  
In Even's rich gloaming  
That's shadowed by cloud,  
And voices are calling  
That rise o'er the night,  
Of ocean-birds homing  
And singing aloud.

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CHILDHOOD.

GLAD in the glowing  
Light of their spring,  
Child-hearts in laughter  
Ripple and ring ;  
Happy, not knowing  
What may befall  
In that Hereafter,  
When the leaves fall.

Now are the roses  
Buds but to see,  
Mosses yet wreathing  
Blossom and tree ;  
As each uncloses,  
Seem we to hear  
In its still breathing,  
Song swelling near ;—

Chords that were sounding  
Ere the world was,  
Where the Immortals  
Pass and repass ;  
Where by the bounding  
River of gold,  
Far through pearl portals,  
Fold beyond fold,

See we that splendour  
Whence we are come,  
Love like light living  
Here in her home ;  
High, yet so tender,  
In each bright birth  
Working and weaving  
Gladness on earth !

So in the singing  
Days of our dawn,  
Heaven's veiling glory  
Round us yet drawn,  
See we no springing  
Sorrow or strife,  
Know but one story,  
Lovely is Life !

S O N N E T S.



## SONNETS.



### I.

#### APRIL TWILIGHT.

IT is a calm sweet evening ; the orbèd moon,  
Luscious with a pale golden springtide glow,  
Is rising solemnly, patient and slow ;  
Dusk shades are falling fast, and soon, full soon,  
Night will brood cloud-clad on the sleeping town,  
Darkness will cover all its weal and woe ;  
But for those hearts that ever ebb and flow  
In unison with Nature, and, alone,  
Feel the companionship of the great world  
Throbbing with all the burden of her soul,  
Is endless hope and sunshine in the night,  
As through those thunder-vapours that are hurled  
Together with an æry organ-roll,  
Breaks evermore the lightning of delight.

## II.

## SEPTEMBER STORM.

BUT even now fierce rain was beating fast  
    Upon the shivering woodlands, and the cry  
    Of southern winds fresh from captivity  
    Still echoed on the regions overpast ;  
But few short moments gone, the autumn blast  
    Of torrid ether rent the cloudful sky,  
    Dashed through its leaden mountains heapèd  
        high,  
    And flashing torrents from their ruins cast ;  
Yet now all strife is over, lulled and gone  
    For aye to rumble on through Arctic seas,  
Red floods of sunset burst, as fresh as dawn,  
    From the bright King of planet emperies,  
And pale blue heavens gleam from rain-clouds torn,  
    Fair and untroubled in their maiden peace.



## III.

## WORLD'S WOE.—I.

O FOR a wind to roll this fog away ;  
These dreary mists that pitilessly hide  
The clear deep sky of truth, home where abide  
Life, Love, and Beauty in immortal day !  
Sages have had sweet glimpses, in the grey  
Gone ages, of that everlasting tide  
Of light celestial, the ocean wide  
Of Heaven broad-breaking on the mortal clay ;  
And have awakened from the blissful dream,  
Full of fresh fervour from its glamouring,  
And writ rapt records, in prophetic tone  
Of mighty verse, that to our senses bring  
Some scent of thymy hills in sunset gleam,  
Where mused those grey bards at night fall, alone.

## IV.

## WORLD'S WOE.—II.

BUT no ! that time again may never be ;  
'Twas but the changing glory of a dream  
Fallen on their eyes with the rich even beam,  
And is lost now to all futurity ;  
Clearer and colder visions we are to see ;  
Straining our weak sight thro' the riven seam  
Of Night, and Nature's dark immensity,  
And through that vaster gulf that parts the stream  
Of conscious being from a lifeless sea,  
Chill cavern-solitude yawns on our sense  
And boundless Death breaks in upon our eyes,  
Yearning to see some glorious vision rise ;  
We sink to mother Earth in sorrow, whence  
Our soul upsprang unto Infinity.

## V.

## IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT.

PASSING from one high overhanging shade  
Of rocky bluffs bare of all herb or tree,  
We gain a valley sloping to the sea  
Blue glancing in the sheer sunlight that played  
Over the waves like a rich diamond braid ;  
Haunted by a far-murmuring melody,  
The echo of wave-plash waft from that bright sea,  
Summer air surges freshly overhead,  
Immersing all sense in a dreamful flow  
Of fantasies unutterably sweet,  
That seem to home them in that mornlit vale ;  
And save the flashing of the seabirds fleet,  
Circling around us with their mournful wail,  
The clear blue heaven is one unbroken glow.

## VI.

## HASTINGS.

A CLUSTER of red roofs deep in the cleft  
Of seaward shouldering bluffs, to eastward strown  
With gorse and grazing herds, treeless and brown;  
To westward crowned with all that Time has left  
In dim remembrance of that Norman theft  
That flung free Hastings 'neath the feudal frown,  
Grey broken walls that echo the renown  
Of him who England from her children reft.

Now quiet is here, and hushed for evermore  
Is all the din, and pale and dead the pride  
And blaze of antique pomp and chivalry,  
And halls that, hanging on the southern shore,  
Once rang with passionate song from side to side,  
Ring only to the tempest and the sea.

## VII.

## HASTINGS.

DEAR town of ruddy roofs and dwellings olden  
And mazy ways from winding street to street,  
How fresh thou look'st in thy hale age, to greet  
The summer flush of sunrise falling golden !  
Rooted so sure 'twixt bluffs to east and west,  
That tower out seaward as 'twere to enclose  
Thy populous haven from all winds but those  
That speed thy weary fishers home to rest ;

Bearing on stormbeat strand the memories  
Of broader traffic, and a richer throng  
Of warriors mailed and merchants in thy midst,  
And sometime pomp of joust and festal song ;  
But joying now, as then thou never didst,  
In naught but peaceful toil and fruits of peace.

## VIII.

Ψυχή.

ONE morning, in the young year's early days,  
When Earth lay locked in January cold,  
We saw a butterfly flit, free and bold  
As 'twere midsummer, thro' the shimmering haze  
Broken only by the winter sun's sick blaze,  
That ruthlessly from ocean on us rolled—  
A harvest thing of dun and dusky gold  
Belated by the lure of timeless rays.

So, in the mists of being, might a soul  
Untimely born into an alien air,  
Stray shivering in that life's chill fog and foam ;  
And though all tides of trouble round it roll,  
Yet on its way in hope still bravely bear,  
Rich with the roseflush of its summer home.

## IX.

## MAY MORNING.

O MAY, thou smiler on unnumbered years,  
Bright blue-eyed harbinger of Summer's glow,  
Crownèd of all the springtime's tender flow,  
Welcome wert thine, even hadst thou come in tears ;  
Coming as now thou comest, free from fears,  
Far banishing all thought of want or woe,  
Thou seem'st both harbinger and angel now,  
And Nature gladdens as thy presence nears.

Why should our hearts be thankless, voices still ?  
Thou art as kind and lovely as of yore ;  
Why, when our fathers welcomed thee in hill  
And plain with pomp of village festival,  
Joying the more as they praised thee the more,  
Should we not hail thee, dearest month of all ?

## X.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

(D. 27 April, 1882.)

DEAR Emerson, thy name can never die  
While there are souls to kindle, hearts to warm ;  
Its casual mention shall call up a swarm  
Of thoughts that deepest in our nature lie ;  
Shall wake the brooding world of memory  
To life and music,—shower down softest balm  
On stormtost souls aye thirsting for that calm  
That reigned divinely in thy heart and eye ;

Brother of ours, and universal Earth,  
Strong seer into supremest mysteries,  
The human heart of hope that beat in thee,  
To us who are the kinsmen of thy birth  
Shall never cease to beat in sympathy,  
And speak to ours in bird and flower and breeze.



## XI.

## STOKE POGIS.

A LOWLY grey old church all ivy-grown  
Amid a waving elm-grove hid away,  
Where through legendic panes the rich lights  
play

On age-worn floor and many a storied stone ;  
Even such a solitude as singer lone,  
Deep brooding on the night of our brief day,  
Might love to linger in, when evening grey  
Stole over to the woodland wind's low moan ;

Haunted by memory of him who wrought  
For all the years his sober song and sweet,  
Stretched under yonder yew tree's solemn shade,  
This resting-place shall evermore be sought  
Of them that love to tread where paced his feet,  
Where round them rings the music that he made.

## XII.

## MARLOW.

A SWEET shy hamlet bosomed in elm-bowers  
Where sirens of all feather sing and sleep,  
Whereround wood-shrouded hills forever keep  
Calm watch through noontide and through mid-  
night hours ;  
A river lordliest in this land of ours  
Slow winding past the fields white mowers reap  
And bloomy meadow banks where willows weep  
Beside their mossgrown graves and ivy towers;—  
  
That lowly home where he, the lord of love  
And singing, whom all Life knew for her own,  
Spent months of toil and sorrow and sometime  
peace ;  
Of whom all breathes—his beechen woods above,  
The soft lawns meadowsweet and clover strown,  
The lilled river asleep beneath its trees.

## XIII.

## AUTUMN.

WHEN mild October, close on harvest time,  
Comes lengthening twilight and delaying dawn,  
And bathes in colder dews each dell and lawn,  
And strips the woodland of its withering prime ;  
When brown leas bear a boding touch of rime,  
And the brave lark thrills heavenward at mid-  
morn

His loud last song, before that tempest-borne  
Far faring of him to some sunnier clime;—

The old Earth knows her winter is at hand ;  
And clasping close her happy autumn-sheaves,  
And rich in promise of her seeded land,  
Rests, with a wreath of rose and russet leaves  
On her brown brow light-lying, lone and grand,  
Biding the Dark that ripens while it reaves.

## XIV.

‘L’amor che muove ’l Sole e l’altre stelle.’

So calm a morning does not often shine  
On autumn woods and fields of glimmering dew ;  
‘Aloft the sun thrills in his heavenly blue,  
Below all earth lies bathed in bliss divine ;  
No ripple breaks the river’s radiant line,  
No rustle creeps the grey-haired willows through ;  
Rings only, out of throats of many a ‘hue,  
The mirth of hearts fresh fired with Nature’s wine ;

Steals only, in all breath of earth and heaven,  
An undertone our souls are dull to hear  
Of that high song once heard through spheres love-  
riven

By one who woke and wrote in joy and fear ;  
Ah, not as unto him to us is given  
To meet such music with unclouded ear !

## XV.

## SUNWARD.

WESTWARD we walked, to see the setting sun ;  
A balmy breath of evening round us blew,  
And tenderest saffron flushed the sky, where-  
through

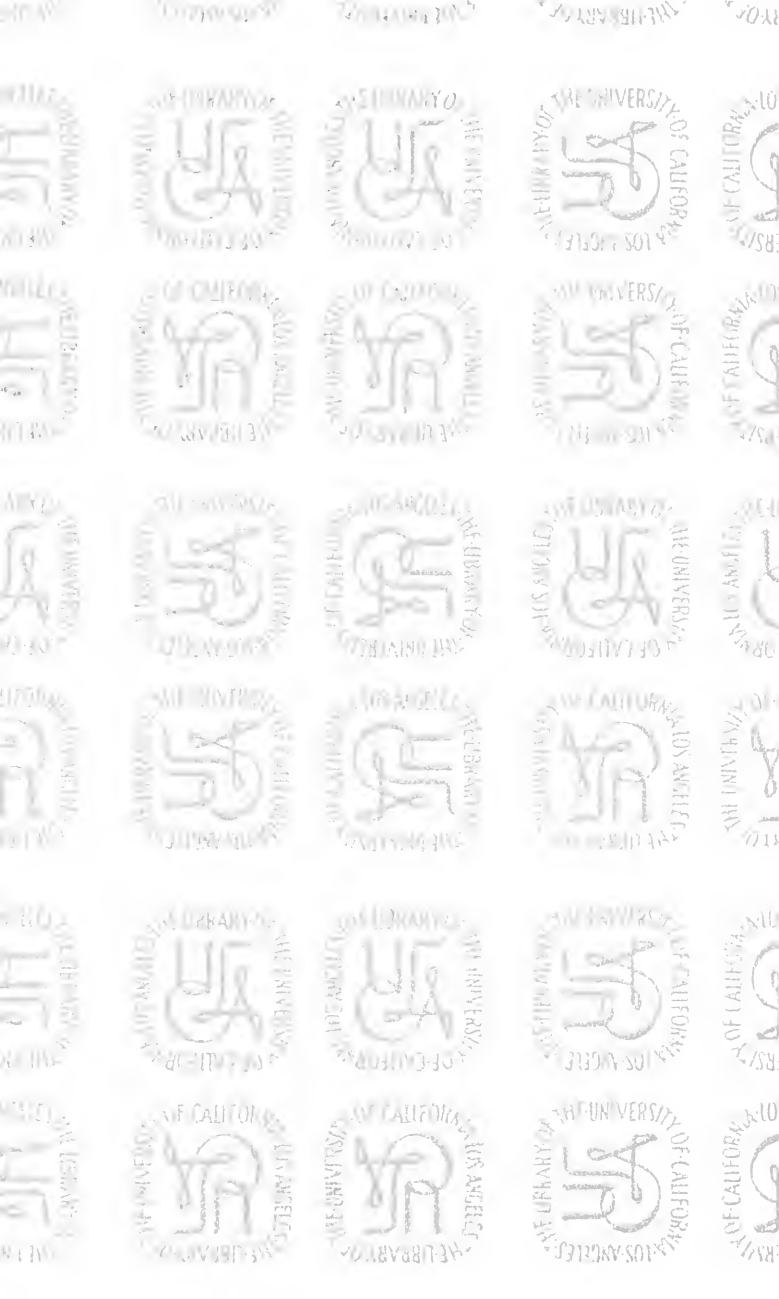
Light clouds like golden threads shot one by one ;  
As the sun sank, a rose-red splendour won  
Upon the purpling west ; the glory grew ;  
Soft carols from the branches rang anew  
As though the morning were but now begun ;—

One silver sickle in the fields of light  
Hung over yellow harvest heaps below,  
And slowly on wide wings uprose the Night ;  
Still in the western heaven that gracious glow  
Lingered in deeper crimson, till the bright  
Stars leapt forth, and Day's pulses ceased to flow.

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